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Adventure

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Three Complete Novelettes

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PERUVIAN lakes prove no problem to an American civil engineer, but his looting-party have more to reckon with than mountains of stone. "MAMU THE SOOTHSAYER," a novelette of modern Incas by Gordon MacCreagh, complete in the next issue.

WHAT happened when *Hakon Klo* denied that *Swain* was his lord and refused to pay rent for the lands of Borgadale. "SWAIN'S HONOR," a novelette of viking days in the Orkney Islands, by Arthur D. Howden Smith, complete in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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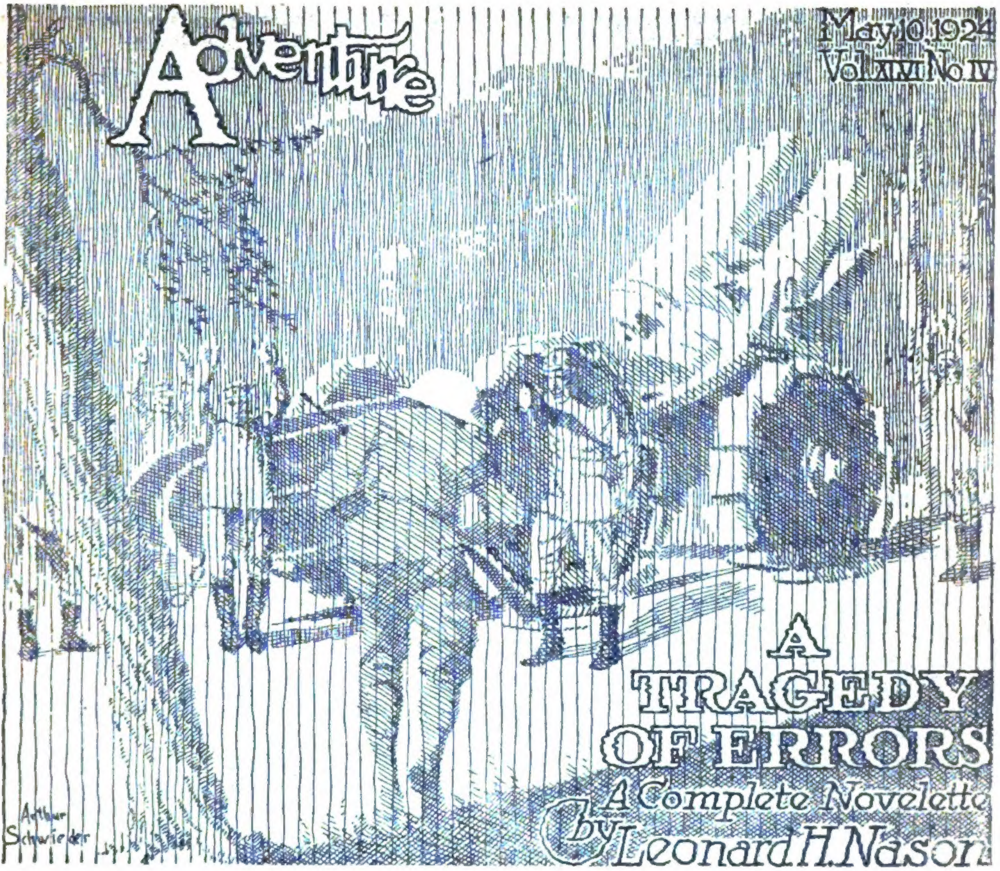

Author of "Three Lights From a Match," "Mid-Summer Night," etc.

A WHITE road ran straight as a rifle-barrel from a place where the bordering trees, the road and the sky met, to another place where the three met again. In among the trees, the roadside, a traveler could discern along shadowy aisles and cool groves, and every now and then a great, mysterious shape, like a behemoth or a mastodon, a shape that melted and flowed away among the shadows so that it was impossible to tell what it was. Just now the road was deserted except for a tiny speck at the far end. The speck grew larger, for it was coming down the road slowly but steadily.

About midway between the two horizons was a small house of cement, an outgrown tool-chest, almost large enough for a man to turn around in. This was a road-mender's cottage and, since the road-mender was off about his business, was now closed tightly with shuttered windows.

A man sat in its shade and now and again peered around the corner of it up the road. Eftsoon his vigilant eye espied the speck that was growing larger every minute. Immediately the man behind the house rose up. He was dressed in an olive-drab uniform; he wore a tin hat over one eye; a mean-looking revolver was belted about his waist, and his cheek was swelled by something he had in his mouth.

This man peeked around the house and then spat with a satisfied air, making a huge brown spot on the white surface of the road. When the speck was so near that the man behind the house could make out that it was another clad like himself in olive drab, he spoke to himself, grinning.

"Good," said he. "I was afraid it was a frog."

Then he stepped out into the road,

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revealing upon his left arm a blue band on which were sewed in red the letters, "M. P." and awaited the approach of the newcomer.

The newcomer stepped briskly along. He whistled gaily and even broke into song now and again. He wore tin hat and gas-mask, but no arms. He carried a stout cane with a spike in the end, acquired from a French soldier at the price of a package of cigarets.

"Keep your head down, *Allemande*,
Keep your head down, *Allemande;*
If you want to see your father and your fatherland,
Keep your head down, *Allemande.*"

Thus sang the man coming down the road, his head up and his shoulders back, full of the joy of a good breakfast and a Summer's morning and a brisk walk under a blue sky. The man with the M. P. brassard regarded him darkly and turned so that his left arm was toward the singer.

The singer, wrapped in his own pleasant thoughts, had not noticed the man standing in the road ahead of him until he was quite near. Then he saw him. He saw also the blue brassard with its red letters. His song ceased, but he swung along just as jauntily as before. He began to sing a new song:

"As me an' Sergeant Ferguson was talking to a dame,
An M. P. with a running nose around the corner came;
For him we did not care a hoot, or fifty guys like he,
So yell t' —— with Kaiser Bill and the soldiers of the sea."

This highly disrespectful song was written when all the military police were marines, hence the reference to soldiers of the sea. The man with the brassard heard every word, and his brows lowered and his teeth ground one upon the other.

"Hey, guy!" said he in harsh, rough tones.

"Hey," replied the singer. "How's tricks?"

"Walkin' fer your health?" asked the rough man, registering inflexible determination and bending upon the other man a gaze calculated to make him quail, but which the singer did not seem to notice.

"I'm taking my pet cooties for exercise. Isn't it a fine day?" replied the man who had sung.

"Gaarrgh!" said the rough man.

His words caught in his throat. Finally he fell back upon his old stand-by.

"Got a pass?" he queried chokingly.

He decided that if the other man had no pass he, the M. P., would pistol him on the spot.

"A pass," said the singer in a musing tone. "I think I had one. Let me see. Where did I put it?"

He began to explore his pockets slowly and carefully. The pass did not appear.

The M. P. smiled sarcastically.

"Lost it?" he asked.

"No," said the other man. "I haven't lost it. I've got it somewhere, but I can't get my hands on it. I must have mislaid it."

He searched several more pockets.

"Now, isn't that funny?" he continued. "I can't remember where I put that pass."

"Say, buddy," quoth the M. P., speaking from the extreme left-hand corner of his mouth. "D'yuh see any green in my eye? I ain't been in France nine months without learnin' a thing or two, b'lieve me. Show us yer dog-tag."

"What do you want to see my dog-tag for?"

"Cause I'm goin' to put yuh in the mill, that's what for!"

The other man searched among his garments and produced his identification disk, which he wore about his neck by a leather thong. The military policeman gazed at this earnestly and then wrote down what he found thereon in a small note-book.

"Your name Eadie?" he inquired.

"No," said the other man. "I put that name on my tag so the boche wouldn't know who I was if I got captured."

"Now don't get fresh," snarled the M. P., "or I'll bat you one on the snoot! We don't need no remarks from the cheap seats!"

He continued to write, wetting his pencil in his mouth.

"What outfit yuh out of?"

"Listen," said Eadie. "I've got a pass, and if you'll wait a couple of seconds I can find it for you. You don't need to write down all this stuff."

The M. P. put away his book and pencil with a snort.

"Come on with me," he ordered. "You for the Hotel Dee Barb Wire. Come on!"

The two men began to walk down the long white road toward the distant horizon.

"I hate to put you to all this trouble," said the slighter of the two. "It's too bad to make you walk all the way to town this hot day."

The other man made no reply other than a grunt, and after that the two pursued their way in silence.

The road was deserted. The forest stretched silently on either side, but at intervals the two passed piles of baled hay, stacked up sometimes to a height of twenty feet and covered with camouflaged canvas. Or there would be a wagon convoy, hauled off the road under the trees, the wagons draped with harness and hung with overcoats and canteens. The horses that drew the wagons and the men that drove the horses were out of sight in the forest, sleeping the sleep of the just—and the unjust, too. For just and unjust sleep alike after having driven convoy all night.

This road ran just as straight, with scarcely a bend, north for about seven miles, through Chézy-sur-Marne to Château Thierry, beyond which it could not be used, for the invader had control of it. South, about a mile beyond where the M. P. and his prisoner trudged along, the road entered Viels-Maisons, and ended abruptly at the entrance to a butcher-shop. This was a very logical ending, since the road began in a slaughter-house where killing was done on a scale hitherto unknown.

THE forest ended abruptly and was succeeded by fields of wheat. There were tiny stone cottages on either side and beyond, over the crest of a hill, the roofs and chimney-pots of a town. The policeman and his prisoner halted and took off their helmets and wiped their brows, for the going was hot.

"There!" exclaimed the slight man. "I told you I had a pass."

In the interior of his helmet was a kind of network, with a string that could be tightened or loosened in order to fit the helmet to its wearer's head. Within the net was a sheet of brown paper, which the speaker drew forth with a triumphant air. He was also quite relieved, for he had had some uneasiness of mind regarding the length of time he might have to stay in the stockade.

Prisoners of the Military Police were not admitted to bail and the length of time they spent in confinement pending a hearing of their cases depended upon the amount of road-mending, ditch-digging, truck-loading or latrine-cleaning that there was to be done in the place in which they were confined.

"Lemme see that pass," said the M. P.

He snatched the paper and proceeded to read.

> The bearer, Sergeant Robert Eadie, Battery A, 76th F. A., has authority to proceed to the regimental echelon, Grand Forêt, for a period of rest and recuperation. Sergeant Eadie is not available for duty of any kind.—(*Signed*) George M. Bliss, Captain Medical Corps.

"What the —— kind of a pass is this?" cried the M. P. "Who's a captain, Medical Corps, to go givin' passes to guys in the artillery? What's all this mean? It's phony; I know it is."

"You see," explained the sergeant, "I was in all that last scrap. I ran around a couple of nights without sleep; I got taken prisoner and got away again, and I was pretty near all in. So the old man took me over to the doctor and told him to give me a pass to go back to the echelon so I could get some rest, because he didn't want me to be evacuated and have to go through the replacement camp."

"Waddayuh mean, got taken prisoner and got away again? You tryin' to make a —— fool outta me?"

"I wouldn't gild the lily," murmured the sergeant.

"I'll lily you in a minute," growled the policeman, the sergeant's remark being rather over his head. "Now I don't believe a —— word of this pass. I'm goin' to take you in. I come this far in the heat, I might as well go the rest of the way. It's a shootin' offense, I tell yuh, to be roamin' around back o' the front with a phony pass. Let's go. No more lip now, or I'll spoil this gun over your head."

The march was resumed. In a short time they went past an aeroplane resting comfortably in a field and guarded by two French soldiers. The ship was within a few yards of the road, and the two Americans looked at it with interest.

"What happened to him?" asked the sergeant in French.

"*Il a brulé sa moteur*,"[*] replied one of the guards, "over Château Thierry, and he volplaned down here. He was one of us, not an American."

The other guard came over at this moment from beneath the wing of the ship. He scowled heavily at the two Americans and then spoke rapidly to his comrade. The sergeant's French was very good, but it is hardly to be expected that he would understand the rapid flow of slang and trench language that the scowling guard spat out. For that matter, native-born French people had difficulty in knowing what the *poilus* were talking about at times. The sergeant made out, however, that the guard was objecting strongly to his comrade holding converse with gendarmes.

---

[*] He burned out his motor.

"Not me," cried Eadie, when the guard paused for breath. "This one has just arrested me."

The scowling countenance cleared at once.

"Is that so?" cried the French soldier. "Look, in a few moments you will pass a barrack on the right hand, in which are the Tenth Chasseurs à Cheval. They eat gendarmes."

He gave a few more directions, for which Eadie thanked him gleefully.

"Come on," cried the M. P. "We can't stay here all day chewin' the rag."

"Where'd you learn to speak French?" he asked after they were on their way once more.

"Oh, I learned it at school," replied the sergeant, "and then I practised a lot after I got over here."

They marched almost to the first houses of the town before the M. P., who had been wrinkling his brow for some time, spoke again.

"Do you know enough to ask one o' them frogs for a shot o' *vin rooge?*" he asked.

"Sure do," replied the sergeant. "Will you let me go if I get you a bottle of it?"

The M. P. halted and gazed at the sergeant fixedly.

"No," said he slowly and gratingly. "I wouldn't let you go fer a case o' champagne, with the Venus dee Milo to serve it. Now waddayuh think o' that? You're too fresh altogether."

The sergeant made no reply.

It was but a few steps till they passed a huge stable, the gate of which stood open and before which a number of French soldiers in their shirts were cleaning equipment, shining sabers and washing clothes.

"*Au secours, les pot!*"* cried Eadie suddenly. "*Voici un cogn qui m'accroche.*"

The effect was tremendous. Sabers, bridles, saddles, pails, wash-boards, all clattered to the ground. Heads wearing pointed caps appeared at windows, and a sizable group showed themselves at the entrance to the grain-loft.

"What was that you hollered?" asked the M. P.

"I was asking for a drink," said Eadie. "Want one?"

Duty said, "No;" but the day was extremely hot, and the walk had been dry and dusty. Moreover, it was not the custom of the American soldiery to refuse drinks.

The M. P. halted, and Eadie asked if there was a spare drop of wine about. One of the men tendered him immediately a thing that looked like an overgrown tobacco-pouch. Eadie took this in his two hands, bent back his head, opened wide his mouth and squeezed the pouch. A needle-like stream of red liquid shot out, far down the sergeant's throat. The sergeant moved the bag in small circles, at the same time emitting guttural sounds indicative of the highest pleasure.

The M. P. watched him thirstily. The crowd of French increased.

"Have a drink?" asked the sergeant, tendering the pouch to the M. P.

"I can't work one o' them things," said the M. P. surlily. "Ain't they got a canteen around?"

With suspicious suddenness a canteen was produced, and the M. P. gurgled long and lustily.

"Hah!" cried he at last. "——, that stuff is bitter. Phew!"

One of the French soldiers spoke to him.

"What's he say?" the M. P. asked Eadie.

"He wants to know how you like it."

"The gendarme does not speak French," continued Eadie to the assembled men.

"Gendarme" is not the word he used, but the French soldier-word for gendarme is wholly untranslatable. English holds no equivalent word, and this country has certain rigid postal laws, so "gendarme" will be the word employed. The French soldiers grinned.

"His wine contains a purge," they said. "Stand back a little, comrade."

Before Eadie could comply, a strong shove had separated him from his companion.

"Hey!" cried the M.P.

A most tremendous cloud of hay descended from the grain-loft and smothered the wearer of the red and blue brassard.

---

*Help, gang! I'm pinched!

"*Fiche le camp, toi,*" cried all the French with one voice, which means, being rendered into good American, "Beat it!"

Eadie fled.

The sergeant had not gone more than two jumps into the town when his conscience smote him at leaving the M.P. to the mercy of the French. The M.P. was a Yank after all.

"Hey!" cried Eadie loudly. "Gang up! Gang up! The frogs are beatin' up an M.P."

Truck-drivers, orderlies and motorcycle despatch-riders put their heads from door and window.

"Are they?" cried these. "More power to their arms."

Then they pulled in their heads again.

There was the sound of a whistle being lustily blown in the direction of the stable. Two members of the military police, wild-eyed and panting, rushed around the corner.

"Where is it? Where is it?" they cried.

Eadie pointed silently.

The M.P. blew madly upon their own whistles and waited for reenforcements. They came, to the number of a dozen or more. Also, a half-dozen French gendarmes, the *maréchaussée*, mounted on bicycles, appeared. Then the entire party hastened to the stables. Eadie went at his best pace in the opposite direction.

"I bet they tore all his clothes off and dumped a can of blue paint over him," he muttered to himself.

Then he proceeded into the town at the maneuver gallop.

VIELS MAISONS was a small town, brought suddenly into prominence by the fortunes of war and crowded to suffocation by the back-wash of two armies. The town was almost directly south of Château Thierry, and was the first town of any size that one met with returning from the front.

The inhabitants still lived in their homes, but they were the last outposts of civilization. Beyond the town the cottages were full of soldiers resting from their tour of duty at the front; farther north the houses were used as mess-rooms for the heavy artillerymen. Still nearer the Marne signs bearing the letters P.C. and *Poste de Secours* appeared on the walls; and then nearest of all, on the river's bank, the houses were totally empty, just as their owners had left them, except that some had snipers in the attic and others machine-guns in the cellar.

Eight miles separated Viels Maisons from enemy territory, but eight miles is a long way. The people of the town went about their daily business; children played in the streets and ran errands for their parents; but there was no doubt in any one's mind that there was a war on. Every one of those little black-smocked, wooden-shoed kids carried a gas-mask and knew how to put it on; the farmer driving his cows to pasture wore one, the housewife in her kitchen and the wine-seller in his *estaminet* all wore the yellow, oilskin pouch; and some of them had tin hats within easy reach to clap upon their heads in case of need.

Sergeant Eadie had sought this town because it was a place to go to. It was a town, and the first thing a soldier does after he hits a camp is to locate the nearest town and then visit it, to see if it has signs of life.

Eadie had been sent to the horse-lines to rest his nerves a bit, he having been through a particularly strenuous scrap a few days before. The Germans had crossed the Marne and had been hurled back again, and at the present moment things were in a state of comparative quiet.

Across the Marne, the Tenth, Thirty-fifth and Tenth *Landwehr* Divisions, German, tried to figure out what had hit them, and on the south bank the remnants of the Third Division, American, licked their wounds and waited for Fritz to try his luck again. Eadie's battery commander had seized this moment of quiet to send half a dozen gunners—rendered deaf and dumb by the incessant firing—Eadie, a telephone corporal with a slight wound, and a cook who had taken to his hole and refused to get meals during the bombardment, back to the horse-lines to recuperate. All of them, except the cook, were unavailable for any duty. The cook was to spend the time from seven in the morning until twelve in digging a hole, and from twelve-thirty to five in filling the hole up again. After supper he washed the pans and pots that had been used in the day's cooking.

Eadie had slept all the first day and all the next night. On the morning of the second day he had arisen, sung lustily, partaken of breakfast in bed, brought to him by a cook's police, who yearned to get up to the front and thought Eadie might help him win his desire, and then, having inquired the whereabouts of the nearest town, set off to find it; with what success has been seen.

Eadie found himself presently on the principal street. He looked anxiously about for members of the Military Police, but saw none. There were two or three divisional headquarters in the town and the French corps commander, so the place swarmed with French soldiers; but there were not many Americans about. Eadie reconnoitered; and, satisfied that the affair at the stable had not reached proportions serious enough to bring reenforcements from the town, he drew out a pipe, filled it and lighted it. Eadie did not smoke pipes as a rule, but he had found this one; and, having stolen the tobacco to smoke in it, he extracted double joy from the smoking thereof.

"Givplspeep."

Eadie turned. A French soldier with a long, wavy mustache and a cheek sadly in need of a razor stood at his elbow.

"Peep," said the French soldier.

Eadie looked at him more closely. His blue blouse was unbuttoned, and a shirt of mysterious color was visible, meeting a blue stock that looked like a necktie on a collarless neck. The Frenchman grinned and murmured some unintelligible words.

"This bird has got me stopped," thought Eadie. "He must be an Alsatian."

He was about to turn a deaf ear, as the saying goes; but he noticed that the other man wore the *Croix de Guerre* with two palms, the *Medaille Militaire* and the Volunteer's Medal. Hardly a man to be snubbed. *Croix de Guerres* that were issued with rations did not have palms on them. So Eadie smiled and registered lack of understanding.

The French soldier spoke feelingly for a while, but though Eadie gave the utmost attention he could not catch a single word. At this moment another *poilu* appeared; a tall, thin man, wearing glasses and a full beard. "Headquarters' Clerk" was written all over him. To him turned the other *poilu*.

"Ah, *quel mec!*" cried this last. "He can not understand his own tongue!"

This was said in French that was perfectly recognizable, and a light broke upon the American.

"Say it in French," he cried.

The bearded man grinned. The first *poilu* grinned; then from under his sweeping mustache came the words—

"*Y-a-t-il un fin, deux gouttes, peut-et' de vot' pipe?*"

Or as an American would say—

"How's chances on smokin' the heel o' that pipe?"

Tobacco was a very rare thing in the French Army.

"It's yours," said Eadie, and handed him the pipe. Then he pressed upon him the red bag of tobacco.

"Here, take the whole works. I don't want it anyway."

Before he had gone four steps the two *poilus* were sharing the pipe, smoking it in alternate whiffs.

"And he was talking English to me," said Eadie. "No wonder I couldn't savvy it."

"Huh?" cried some one in his ear.

Eadie jumped.

"Nothing," he said. "I was talking to myself. Gee," said he, as he noticed who had spoken, "where you going with all the gun and spurs?"

"Been guardin' prisoners," said the other man.

Eadie looked at him again in silent admiration. He wore a uniform that fitted as if he had been poured into it. A leather cartridge-belt and an open holster, Western style, were on his waist. Gleaming spurs were upon his polished shoes, and he wore the crossed sabers of the cavalry on his collar.

"I used to be in the cavalry," said Eadie.

He felt somewhat embarrassed, for while he had looked over his shoulder at the two *poilus* he had almost knocked this American down.

"What outfit were you in?" asked the cavalryman.

"Eighteenth," said Eadie, "but they made field artillery out of us. How come there's cavalry up here so near the front?"

"Why not?" asked the cavalryman indignantly. "We do liaison, guard prisoners, all sorts of stuff. We're goin' up to the front, though, pretty quick, just as soon as the Jerries get on the run; and then you'll see some saber stuff."

"Where did you get the prisoners?" asked Eadie.

"They're some the doughboys took last night. They holed out in a farm up in the woods and stood the gang off till their chow run out and then they come in. Want to see 'em?"

"Sure. Where are they?"

"They got 'em in a warehouse. Come on, I'll show you."

THE two went down the street a way and then turned to the right. They were about to cross the road when the warning cry of some French soldiers made them halt.

A huge camion lumbered around the corner, followed by another, swaying and tossing, its canvas curtains fluttering and a cloud of dust following it. The two had very much the appearance of elephants. On the seat of the first were two small Chinamen, Annamese soldiers, their faces quite white with the thick dust that lay upon them. One drove and the other slept; and they had come in that manner, driving day and night, from the other end of France perhaps.

As the camions passed, Eadie, could see horses in each, hay, canteens swaying from hooks and hob-nailed feet jolting with the motion of the truck. Behind the first rolled a seventy-five mounted upon a sort of trailer and behind the second, the gun's caisson. Eadie and the cavalryman ducked across the road. More camions rumbled by.

"Where are they going?" Eadie asked one of the spectators.

"Up there," was the answer with a wave of the hand in the general direction of the north. "*Sous la mitraille.*"*

Truck after truck came down the road, turned the corner and swung northward. Viels Maisons was on the main trunk-road that ran behind the front, from Verdun and the east front, direct to Paris, and all the troops that shifted front by truck passed through it. The end of the column of camions was brought up by an old omnibus painted blue, with screened windows, upon the roof of which sat an *ordnance*, as the French dog-robber was called, swaying like a sailor with the motion of the car and polishing a pair of boots the while. The spectators jeered him merrily.

"Pretty soft to hike that way," said Eadie. "Let's see the prisoners."

The cavalryman led the way under an archway and so into the rear of a building that might have been anything from a cheap apartment house to a warehouse. They climbed the back stairs, narrow and winding, and so to the fourth story, the very highest of all, under the eaves.

"I know they're here," remarked Eadie. "I can smell 'em."

They came out into the loft, where a man with a bayoneted rifle stood guard, and then looked about them.

The muscles along Eadie's spine began to crawl. He had been fighting these men for the last three days; but this was the closest he had been to so many of them, where he had an opportunity to inspect them. When he had been a prisoner it was night, and all soldiers look alike after dark. The prisoners lay about on the floor, about fifty of them, cushioning themselves on dirty straw.

"I bet they were cold last night," remarked the cavalryman, "without no blankets. No wonder they come in."

"They won't bite, will they?" asked Eadie, expecting the cavalryman to laugh; but the cavalryman did not see the joke.

"Naw," said he contemptuously, "they're harmless. Them Jerries ain't no guts. Ain't scared of 'em, are you? ——, wait till you get up to the front! Why, two of us, me and another guy, brought that whole gang down from Condé."

Eadie examined the Germans without reply. He had his own opinion regarding the fighting qualities of German troops. His memories of the German soldiery would spoil his sleep for some time to come.

The men on the straw were all young, husky and clear-skinned. Most of them wore the new regulation frock coat with the fly-front. Brass was too dear an article to be made into buttons, so the latest German coats had bone ones, hidden under a flap. Many of the men wore the ribbon of the Iron Cross, others a decoration that Eadie did not know; some had the silver medal that means two wounds and more had the copper medal for a single wound.

"Looka that guy's spectacles," said the cavalryman, pointing to a German that wore instead of the conventional bows behind his ears, an arrangement made of a coiled spring that went around behind the ears, passed under the lobe and joined the glass again, thus making a very fine arrangement for holding his glasses in place.

"Did he break his glasses?" asked Eadie, for he had never seen that type of spectacle before.

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*Under fire.

"Naw," said the other; "that's the way they wear their glasses. Nifty, ain't it?"

At this moment some one of the prisoners said something in a loud tone and the Germans arose and moved on Eadie and the cavalryman in a mass.

"Hey!" cried Eadie involuntarily, and remembered with a sinking heart that he was unarmed.

The gallant cavalryman slipped nimbly through the door.

"The Jerries are after us!" he yelled to the guard without.

Eadie heard the guard laugh heartily.

"They won't touch yuh!" he said. "The main guy in there was told to have 'em go down in the yard at ten o'clock. They're just goin' out."

The Germans filed past the sergeant, some looking at him curiously, others with their eyes on the ground, all of them very self-contained and dignified. The way a prisoner of war behaves depends on the state of his nerve, that is to say his morale, when he is captured. These Germans belonged to the Thirty-sixth, a quite decent division, Prussians every one of them, and they had not the slightest doubt that they would be back in Germany within the month.

Eadie and the cavalryman went down the stairs after the Germans and so into the yard where the Germans were forming in column. Here the cavalryman paused. The head of the column went under the arch, and there was not room for him to pass.

"Go ahead," said Eadie, quoting the cavalryman's remark of a few minutes before; "they're harmless. Them Jerries ain't no guts."

The cavalryman grinned a little shamefacedly.

"You may think I was scared," he said, "but I wasn't. It's kinda startling to see a gang of them big guys comin' for yuh all of a sudden."

"You don't know the half of it," said Eadie.

The big gate under the arch swung open, and the column started out. In the street they halted again, and there was a wait of a few minutes. A troop of French cavalry appeared, and the troopers lined themselves along both sides of the prisoners.

Eadie, examining the mounts and equipment of the troopers with an appraising eye, noted that the trooper nearest him wore a black eye in the American fashion. Eagerly he looked closer and saw upon the collar of the eye's owner the tiny green tab and the "10" that showed that the soldier belonged to the Tenth Chasseurs.

"That's the gang that rescued me," thought Eadie, "and I'll bet I know who hung that mouse on your eye."

He was tempted to tell his companion all about his arrest and the affair at the barn, but he happened to remember that these cavalrymen were M. P.s too, so he kept the story to himself—to his later satisfaction.

THERE was a loud command, the French drew their sabers and the column moved off. Eadie followed them with his eyes and in so doing noticed that next him stood a maiden of most pleasing appearance. As she happened to look at him at just that moment, the sergeant smiled.

"Where are they going, the boche?" he queried.

"To La Ferte-sous-Jouarre," replied the girl, speaking French with that clear, musical accent which French women have.

The men speak their words gruffly, clipping them and mangling them, and they use so much slang and *argot*, and the words are so sifted through a thick screen of mustache, it is surprizing that they knew what they were talking about themselves.

"They will be almost to Paris when they get there," said Eadie, hoping to see the girl laugh, and wondering what the rules were in Viels Maison about being off the street by a certain hour after nightfall. The girl did not laugh.

"Ah," she said thoughtfully, "La Ferte, it is quite far. It will be very hot today, and the road will be dusty. Oh, the poor boys!"

"The poor boys!" echoed Eadie. "Are you sorry for the boche?"

The girl looked at him calmly.

"No," she said, "I could see them all, every one, dead in the street here and not feel the tiniest bit of pity. See here!"

She showed the sergeant a brooch that held the collar of her dress together. On it was the picture of a young man wearing the uniform of the French Army in prewar days, a blue coat with heavy epaulets.

"He is my fiancé," explained the girl. "He has been a prisoner of war since the beginning. He was taken not far from here, near Rebais, after he had been wounded, and we thought him dead for a long, long time. Then we learned that he was a prisoner. Do you know," she said, smiling at Eadie, "I was so glad that I cried for three days? Four years, it is a long, long time."

"It is," agreed the sergeant for lack of anything to say.

"So then," continued the girl, "whenever I see the boche prisoners, walking in the dusty road or carrying their burdens in the hot sun, mending the roads or emptying garbage, I think of my poor boy far away there in Germany, doing the same thing, only being driven so much harder; for the boche, you know, do not treat their prisoners very well nor give them much to eat."

Eadie said nothing, but felt rather embarrassed. Then the girl asked him the inevitable question that sooner or later the French always asked, man, woman, *poilu* or schoolboy—

"How long do you think the war will last?"

"Oh, it will be over soon," said Eadie. "It can't last very long now."

"That's what we have always thought," answered the girl, "ever since the beginning, but the war has lasted four years. Well then, I must go back to work. Good luck, soldier."

She vanished into one of the stores, and Eadie looked after her thoughtfully.

"Didja date her up?" asked the cavalryman at his elbow, who, since the conversation had been entirely in French, had not understood a word of it.

Eadie, who had been deeply impressed by the girl's story, felt so exalted and virtuous that he took the cavalryman's question in bad part and thought seriously of making fistic reply, but then decided not, for it would but make a fool of him. The two soldiers went aimlessly off toward the square, each hoping that the other would suggest buying a drink.

Another cavalryman rounded a corner.

"Hey!" he called, and Eadie's companion went across the street to speak to him while Eadie waited on the curb for his return. The two cavalrymen talked earnestly for a minute and then both departed rapidly as if on urgent business.

While Eadie yet marveled at this, he saw the M. P. who was directing traffic at the corner leave his post at a run and follow the two cavalrymen. When Eadie lost sight of them the M. P. had caught up with the other two and the three broke into a slow trot. With a slight feeling of chill Eadie noticed that the three turned a corner and went off in the direction of the barn where the French had rescued him from the policeman earlier in the morning.

"Gee," thought he, "I wonder if there'll be any comeback to that affair at the stable?"

He thought a while, and then decided he had better go back to camp.

"That bird has my dog-tag number and name," thought the sergeant, "and there's no telling what kind of a charge he'd make against me."

Another truck convoy passed, white with the dust of a long trip. When it had turned the corner, Eadie noticed a French soldier go to the long shed at one side of the square, where the farmers used to set up their stalls on market-day, and bring out a huge white star made of canvas that the sergeant had noticed standing against the wall. Eadie had wondered what it was for, and now he was to learn.

The French soldier carried the star into the center of the square and then laid it flat on the ground. Then he motioned all the bystanders to give way and leave a clear space. Eadie looked at all this in great wonder. He had a kind of hazy thought that the French soldier might be going to dance on the star or do some acrobatic stunt. No one seemed to be doing anything. They just stood and looked and left the star gleaming in white splendor.

Then, as if some one had pulled a string tied to their ears, every one threw back his head and gazed aloft. Eadie did likewise.

Far up, floating in the blue haze, was a plane. As Eadie watched it, it began to circle lower like a hawk over a hen-yard. Down, down, it came, until it was just above the roofs, when something was hurled out of it and the plane climbed into the upper altitudes again. Whatever had been thrown out hurtled down and one could see a long streamer floating from it.

Clank! It struck the ground. The French soldier stepped grandly out of the crowd, picked up the object; then, shouldering the star, he restored the latter to its place under the shed. Then he went off in the direction of corps headquarters.

As he passed Eadie the sergeant noticed that the object the airplane had thrown was a large tin can, with ribbons attached to make its flight more easily seen. The can probably contained orders, perhaps photographs, and the approach of the plane had been telephoned from some anti-aircraft observer, so that the people in the headquarters would have time to go out and place the star, and thus direct the aviator where to throw out his message.

The star could not be left in place permanently, because it would be a difficult job to keep people and horses from walking over it, but the principal reason was that if any wandering German plane went that way and saw the star, Viels Maisons would entertain callers that very night, and the Imperial German Army's store of aerial bombs would be lessened by at least twelve.

SOME mysterious intuition, some inner prompting that he could not understand the reason for, made Eadie look about to see how many Americans there were in that crowd. It was a distinct shock to find that he was the only one.

"Why, of course," the sergeant reassured himself, "I'm the only man here that hasn't any job. All the Yanks in this town are attached to some unit here, or else are M. P.s, and they've probably gone to dinner. Besides, what if there aren't any on the street? That doesn't mean anything."

The inner voice assured him that he was a liar. Eadie replied to the inner voice and admitted that he was.

"I have a hunch," said he aloud, "that somehow, in some way, these M.P.s running and the cavalryman beating it, and all the Yanks gone off the streets are connected up with that scrap at the stables this morning. If I had the nerve I'd go up and see if a fight was going on, but if there was I might get lynched for having started it. I'll have some chow and then home for mine."

With this resolution in mind, he went into the first store he came to and asked what might be had in the way of eating-material.

"R-r-r-regard!" cried the proprietor, waving his hand about his head.

Eadie regarded. The shelves of the store were quite bare. In the small window hung a few discouraged-looking sausages; there was a box of potatoes against the counter that no respectable potato-bug would light on to rest his wings; there were a few miscellaneous boxes and cans about containing pepper, salt and things of that kind, but nothing that could be used to make a cold meal of.

"Des conserves?" inquired Eadie, meaning, "Any canned goods?"

"N'a plus!" which means, being interpreted, "Ain't none."

"This is the war," went on the proprietor very angrily. "No meat, no coal, no butter, no eggs, no tobacco, and very poor wine. Ah, the war! The railroads are full, the wagons are packed, the roads are jammed, all with soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, and an honest man can get no goods to sell because there is room for nothing but soldiers."

The proprietor of the store was a little man, with popping eyes and a nose like a plum. After he had recited his wrongs, his nose got very red and his eyes popped out very far.

"Can't you buy from the farmers?" asked Eadie.

"The farmers! A thousand names of a pipe! Do you know where I used to get all my eggs? From Grand Bordeaux. Who has Grand Bordeaux Farm now? Soldiers! American soldiers, too, with their dirty *gamelles* * full of chickens that used to lay my eggs."

After that Eadie withdrew. On the doorstep he spat and meditated.

"To think that I came three thousand miles to keep the boche away from a bird like that!"

He spat again and then remembered the little French girl whose lover had been prisoner for four years, so he dismissed the whole unpleasant thought from his mind and began a canvass of the town for food.

"The police may be after me any minute," he thought, "but I can't go from now until five o'clock without chow."

Eadie went into every *épicerie*—there were not many—in the town, but they were all bare of food. He could not even buy a can of sardines. Some of the people referred him to the French "cooperative," which corresponds to the canteen in the American Army, but the cooperative was at quite a distance and Eadie did not relish the walk that he would have to take to get there. By the time he had come out of the last grocery store he noticed the Americans were beginning to appear again, and his thoughts recurred to his escape from the police and the probable consequences thereof.

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*Mess-kits.

"If that bird didn't have my serial number," thought Eadie, "it wouldn't be so bad, but if anything happened to him I'm liable to be in all kinds of a mess. I'm going to brace one of these guys and see what's up."

While he evolved a scheme to pump the M.P. without at the same time displaying too great eagerness, a man with a leather bag, a headquarters orderly, appeared.

"He'll know if anything big happened," decided Eadie and thereupon hailed the orderly—

"Got a match, soldier?"

"Sure," said the orderly. "Got any makin's?"

He produced matches, and the two soldiers rolled cigarets. The orderly belonged to a branch of the great family of messenger boys and, true to type, was only too glad to find an excuse to loiter by the way a moment.

"Anything doing in this town?" queried Eadie.

"Nope; town's deader'n goldfish. Too much work, too many M.P.s, too near the front. The boche'll be in here any day. We're all packed up to beat it on a second's notice."

"So?" asked Eadie, mildly curious. "Hear about the fight at the frog stables?"

With some trepidation Eadie waited for the other's reply.

"Nope. They have a fight up there?"

"Sure did," said Eadie. "They knocked an M.P. for a loop. The frog soldiers got sore at him for something."

"That so!" exclaimed the orderly. "Them frog cavalrymen are bad guys. They better not start anything, though. Well, I must be goin'. Beat up an M.P., huh? The old man'll raise particular —— about that. Them —— frogs is too fresh anyway. S'long."

Eadie felt more comfortable after his interview with the orderly. Probably the frogs had just thrown hay on the M.P. and had let him go as soon as Eadie had made his escape. On the other hand, some of those cavalrymen had looked very mean, and Eadie had seen quite a number of leather belts, buckle foremost, whirling in the air. It was kind of raw to get a fellow Yank into a mess like that.

"Ah, that scurve," decided Eadie. "He deserved a beating. Maybe he won't be so hard-boiled the next time."

The sergeant decided he would not go back to camp yet a while. There was nothing to do but sit around, and Eadie would rather stay in town. The M.P.s might be after him, though. Well, if they were he'd give them a chance to get him. He crossed the square to where an M.P. directed traffic.

"Where's the road to Grand Forêt?" asked Eadie.

"First one on your left," said the M. P., waving his arm at a French motor car in a bored manner. "Got a pass?"

"Yes," said Eadie. "Want to see it?"

"No! I don't want to see no pass. They won't let you go out of town, though, unless you've got one. There's a police post on all the roads."

"So I've noticed," said Eadie. "I hear one of your men got beat up by the French cavalry this morning."

"The —— you preach!" cried the director of traffic. "This is the first I've heard of it. Where did it happen?"

"I don't know," said Eadie. "I just heard about it."

"Here comes the sergeant," said the M.P. "Let's ask him if he knows about it."

The sergeant of police was making a tour of inspection. He was big and lowering, and "policeman" stuck out all over him. All he needed was a club to twirl. He was a real cop, and Eadie cursed himself mentally for having put his head in the lion's mouth by approaching the police at all.

"Did you hear anything about one of our guys gettin' beat up by the French this morning?" the traffic man asked the sergeant of police.

"No," said the sergeant. "I never did. Who was tellin' you av it?"

"This feller here claims he heard one of our guys got beat up this morning."

"Where'd yuh hear it?" the sergeant asked Eadie, bending lowering brows upon him and producing pencil and note-book with a professional air.

"I was talking to an orderly from headquarters and he just happened to mention it," answered Eadie uncomfortably.

"Know his name?"

"No, I don't."

"'Twas not one of our min," said the sergeant. "It must have been wan av thim amminition-train bulls. They have no brains at all. No, I have not heard av any wan of us bein' hurted. 'Twill be a sorry day for France whin any av her soldiery raises hand against wan of this outfit. No, I know nawthing of such an occurrence."

He began to talk to the traffic man, and Eadie hastened to depart, a slight perspiration upon his brow.

"Golly," he thought, "that was nerve-racking. I guess I don't need to beat it back to camp, though. No one seems to know about that scrap, so it can't have been very serious."

EADIE sat down on the curb and watched the convoys passing. There were a great many motor cars going in all directions, with an officer in the rear seat giving directions to the driver from a map. It was strange the officer could not sit in the front seat too; but this would not have been military.

An ambulance went by and stopped in the square. A man wearing the wreath and "INT" on his collar that showed he was an interpreter, hurried over to it. Eadie went himself to see the cause of this strange proceeding.

In the ambulance was a wounded German, covered with a blanket. Another German, an old man and very trembly, sat on the seat. Him the interpreter questioned, but the old man had not much to offer. He was too dazed, too terrified by his experiences to remember anything of value. Eadie could not understand what was said, but he knew the old boy must be from the *Landwehr* division; that Eadie knew had been on the north bank of the Marne.

The fact that a *Landwehr* division held the north bank had been known to the Americans for some time, and for this reason they had not expected any activity from the German side of the river. *Landwehr* divisions are made up of older men and are not used as assault troops. But the Germans, being downy birds, had slipped two storm divisions through the garrison of the north bank and while the *Landwehr* stayed in position on the bank, had crossed the Marne and had a glorious time. One division had gone almost five miles, but the other had stopped on the south bank and is still there even to this day—where the wheat grows very lush and green by the riverside.

The interpreter got out of the ambulance. "He's dumb," he remarked to an officer that stood by. "But I was curious to know how he came to be captured. I thought all his crowd stayed on the other side. He was rowing a boat across for some officers, he says, and some Americans sunk the boat and killed the officers and dragged him ashore. That's one of the passengers on the floor. He's unconscious."

At this moment several of the police appeared and drove the crowd, among them Sergeant Eadie, who went back to his place on the steps of the house.

More convoys, more tiny blue automobiles, more French, American and Italian soldiers. Civilians, children, each with his black apron and soldier cap, rattling wooden shoes along the sidewalk. Far off on the other side of the square, over toward the left, was a gap in the buildings through which the sergeant could glimpse a bit of road. There were motor cars continually crossing that gap, steadily and evenly, like dropping sand in an hour-glass. Eadie watched them absent-mindedly. He felt a distinct chill when he realized what they were. They were ambulances, hurrying to the field hospitals, their back curtains down and their pitiful cargoes hidden.

"I'd better go home," thought Eadie. "There's no fun here. I think this is my unlucky day."

He felt distressed and apprehensive; he had a very strong feeling that disaster approached, that there was a sword suspended above his head by a thin hair. What an inhospitable place France was the minute a man got a hundred yards from his own outfit!

"I'll have a drink," thought Eadie, "and then I'll flit."

He looked about for an *estaminet* or a sign that said *Débit de Boissons*. When he discovered one—they were not hard to find—he arose and went in that direction, licking his lips.

The *débit* was a typical place of refreshment. Low ceiling, big windows and a number of small tables blackened by the rubbing of generations of greasy sleeves. There were two bearded *poilus* playing dominoes, an American sergeant in the last stages of not wisely but too well, and an old civilian who read an ancient newspaper. The civilians were always old, or very, very young. From sixteen to sixty the French wore blue clothes and did their bit on the lines.

Eadie ordered some fearful drink that tasted horribly and felt beautifully and had it about half-down when a bustling American came in and, calling the properietor by his first name, ordered a drink in very poor French. This man was a motor-cycle dispatch rider about to go on duty.

"Hello, buddy," he greeted Eadie. "How's the liquor?"

"Try it," invited the sergeant.

"No, thanks," said the other man; "got one o' my own comin'."

He sat down at Eadie's table, however, and manufactured a cigaret.

"What outfit you out of?" he asked.

Eadie informed him, and the two conversed about what the boche had done and how far the drive had gone and the prospect of an early ending of the war.

"It'll run two years more, I'll bet," said Eadie.

"All o' that," agreed the other man. "Somebody's not going to mind, though. I hear that all the divisions that have been at the front are going to send a detail back to the States to be instructors to the new army."

"Uh!" grunted Eadie absent-mindedly.

His eyes were on a French soldier who had just entered and ordered a drink. Upon this soldier's collar was a green patch, and upon the green patch was a black hunting-horn, and the figure "10." The newcomer belonged to the Tenth Chasseurs, and they were the men of the stable and the rumpus in the morning.

The dispatch rider followed Eadie's gaze.

"Them cavalrymen are a bad bunch," he remarked, seeing the newcomer. "They killed an American M.P. this morning. Beat him to death with their belts."

"Ow!"

Eadie turned hot and then cold. He felt as if some one had smitten him in the stomach. They had killed an M.P. He, Sergeant Eadie, was responsible for his death. A military cop he might have been, with the brand of Cain upon his arm so that every man's hand was against him; but he was an American just the same. And it was Eadie's fault. An accessory to murder, that was what he was.

The motorcycle rider's voice droned on, but Eadie paid no heed. He was thinking of stone walls, the stockade at Gièvres, general court martial, a division drawn up in hollow square with one man in the center the target of all eyes. One man and a rope. Eadie had seen a public execution at Bassens, and he knew what it was like.

The dominoes clicked, flies buzzed, the old civilian rattled his paper, and the drunken Yank in the corner thumped the table and demanded service.

Eadie rose unsteadily to his feet, his head reeling, his one thought to get away—anywhere, so long as he was away. He went out the door in a fog, heedless of the cries of the motorcycle rider. Outside the door, in the crowded street, he felt terribly afraid. The sun was so bright, there were so many people, every eye seemed turned his way. He expected the M.P. at the cross-roads to come for him with a shout.

Eadie stopped and shrank against the wall. Could he get safely through the town? It had never seemed so crowded, nor the faces of the passers-by so unfriendly. Well, he had better be going.

What was it that so suddenly prevented his moving? Why, hands. Hands held his collar; hands were at his wrists. The sergeant looked closer. A blue cuff with the diagonal wide stripe and the diagonal narrow stripe of the French Army gendarme. Well, the strain was over, and they had arrested him. Eadie felt relieved. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all. He was glad it was a French gendarme and not an American, though. Voices shouted in his ear.

"Lay off," cried Eadie. "Don't yell so loud. I won't resist. I'm the guy you want."

They cried the louder, two or three of them, but the gendarme the loudest. Then Eadie pulled himself together.

"I mustn't let these frogs buffalo me," he muttered.

Then, because he was taken and the worst was over, he became calmer and, turning his head, perceived that one of those that held him was the man who brought the drinks in the *débit*.

"Sacred name of a thousand pipes," cried this one. "Thief, pig, liar! Cursed blue! Ah, the robber! Anisette! At two francs the glass, and this robber would not pay. Cheat! Species of bedbug! Gorilla-face!"

The vendor of wine raised his hands to heaven, rolled up his eyes; then, bringing his hands down upon his head with an audible knock, he seized several locks of hair and endeavored to tear them out bodily.

"Leech, blood-sucker!" he shrieked. "Pay me that which thou owest!"

Out of the fog of confusion that enveloped

Eadie's mind arose the recollection that he had not paid for his drink.

"Leggo!" he cried; and the gendarme, sensing what he was about to do, released his wrist.

The only thing the sergeant could find in his pocket was a five-franc note and this he thrust upon the man that still called to the high heavens.

"Take it all," said Eadie in French, "only leave me in peace."

Dull silence, an incredulous mutter from the gendarme and a slight scraping noise indicative of the rapid departure of the vender of wine.

Eadie found himself free and gazing dumfoundedly at three disappearing backs; that of the vender of wine, a *poilu* that had aided in the capture and the gendarme. They were hastening back to the *débit* to convert the five-franc note into something very pleasing to the stomach.

"Come on, kid," said Eadie aloud, and feeling rather foolish. "Be a man. Get yourself out of this mess. Beat it for the echelon while the beating is good."

Then, taking his courage in both hands, he departed up the street and so to the road back to camp, staring every one very boldly in the eye in order to appear to have a clear conscience. When he went by the quarters of the *chasseurs* the gate was shut and the place appeared deserted.

"I suppose they're all under arrest," thought the sergeant.

THE echelon of an artillery regiment was composed of all those men not members of the firing battery; that is, not members of a gun crew. At the battery position was only the barest possible number of men necessary to handle the guns, two machine-gun crews, a detail of telephone men, and perhaps six or seven more, liaison agents, observers and officers' servants.

The remainder of the regiment formed the echelon and stayed quite a distance behind the lines, where they took care of the battery's chores, did all kinds of disagreeable work and begged the officer in command to send them up to the front. Not all of them did the last, but most of them did.

The lieutenant colonel of the regiment commanded the echelon, and a second lieutenant commanded each battery's detail. All the other officers were at the front. Each night a convoy went up to the batteries with food and ammunition and came back again before daylight, for horses were scarce and none were kept with the batteries lest they be killed, but one or two for the liaison agents to ride when they carried messages to the battalion or regimental post of command.

The echelon of Eadie's regiment was in the Grand Forêt, about ten kilometers from the front. It was in a thick part of the forest and supposedly well camouflaged. In the center of a glade, about which the battery picket-lines were strung, was a huge tent, such as the Y.M.C.A. used for meetings, or the field hospitals used for wards. This was where the members of the headquarters staff worked, where the mail was sorted and where the officers ate. It was very new, very long, and very yellow and shining. It was not very conspicuous—no more so than a bull's-eye in the center of a target. More regarding this tent anon.

Eadie returned safely. The police along the road had not bothered him. A man going toward the front ran very little risk of being stopped. It was when he was going the other way that the police became inquisitive.

It had been a long, dusty walk from the town; and the way was none the easier for the fact that the sergeant had had no dinner. The Furies pursued him likewise, and he knew not what he would do. His active imagination showed him the prospect of being hunted all up and down France as a murderer, and he liked it not.

Eadie drew aside to let a long column of horses go by, coming back from being watered and then followed them into the forest. Smoke from the rolling kitchens curled about pleasantly, the odor of hay blew from the picket-lines where the men were shaking it down for the night's feed, and the horses whinnied and stamped at the smell of it. Stable sergeants called to delinquents or bawled directions about the amount of oats to be put in each feed-bag. Pans clattered, mess-kits rattled, there was a snatch of song from among the trees.

"Doughboys in the trenches, waitin' for a raid;
Artillery was ready, every piece was laid;
Over come the Germans, shoutin' fit to kill,
Up jumped the M.P.s and put 'em in the mill."

The song ended in a chorus of jeers and laughter. Eadie sat down upon a log and rested his head dejectedly in his hands. It would seem that everything was going to remind him of the event of the morning.

"I wish I'd stayed at the front," thought the sergeant, "and then I'd have missed all this trouble."

The front! Ah, that was where a man was a man and none bothered whether he had a pass or not. The front, where you went to bed when you could and got up when you felt like it; where all was excitement and romance and the red joy of battle.

It is strange that the sergeant should think thus, but thus he thought. It is a strange fact indeed and hardly to be believed, but the most active, battling, clanging front was to be preferred to the rear, and a man would be better fed and better treated under fire of the enemy than he would a hundred miles back of the lines. Assuming, of course, that he belonged to a combat unit.

Thus meditated the sergeant as he watched the cooks preparing supper and the men among the trees feeding the horses. He himself was exempt from all duty as per the order he carried in his pocket. This was so that he might recover from his fatigue of the previous battle.

Another man approached the sergeant's log and sat him down with an air of sadness. This one was an officer, a second lieutenant, red-faced and gray-haired, with the back of his neck bearing the marks of many a boil. From him came a fragrance of fermented fruit-juice.

"Hello, sergeant," said he. "What yuh thinkin' about this evenin'?"

"Not much," said the sergeant gloomily.

"Where'd yuh get the keen blouse?"

"Oh, this?" asked the sergeant, looking with pride at a very fine whipcord blouse that he was wearing. "Why, my old one got pretty well shot up in that house they caved in on me, so Lieutenant Garfield gave me this one."

"He did, huh?"

The officer chuckled deeply.

"Sergeant, tell that to a Jawn, but not to me."

"Well," replied the sergeant, "he would have if I'd asked him for it."

The fragrant man laughed again.

"Eadie," cried he, "you bring the sunshine into my life. A lonely old man I have been for many a year, but I have a hearty laugh whenever you are about. I mind the time you was sergeant o' the guard at Ethan Allen and the colonel pulled your belt for not marchin' the prisoners at double time."

"The time I marched them over for a bath? An hour before reveille on a Winter morning. I never figured out how he saw me."

"Hah-hah," laughed the officer. "He was standin' in his tent door with a pair of field-glasses, watchin' you all the time."

"I didn't mind that so much," said Eadie, "but that three months' wonder that was officer of the day slapped me right in the mill. I guess that's why I never got anything out of it."

The fragrant officer wept.

"There's worse things than a non-commissioned officer bein' confined," said he, thrusting out his lower lip to remove a tear that had trickled down over his upper. "Think of a man bearin' a commission, signed by the President of the United States, bein' publicly humiliated."

"How come?" asked Eadie with interest.

He became suddenly aware of the strange behavior of his companion on the log, and he at once stopped thinking of his own troubles.

"The lieutenant colonel done it," said the other man. "The old lady-dog! He insulted me, that was rankin' duty-sergeant when he first come to the troop, a brand new shave-tail, twenty-one years ago. I remember him with his new gauntlets and his shoulder-straps and the little downy mustache like a hen's eyebrow. And now he's insulted me."

"What did he do?" asked Eadie sympathetically.

"I ast him would he have a drink with me," said the officer, "and he said, 'No.' "

"Never mind," said Eadie after a pause. "Have you got any left?"

The officer had. He and Eadie ruined it.

"You're a good lad," said the lieutenant, "and I like you. You're a man of education an' refinement, an' I ain't. You're the guy that ought to wear the bars an' me the stripes. Me, a second lieutenant, with twenty-nine years in. The non-coms give me the laugh and the officers won't have nothin' to do with me. It's what yuh get for bein' ambitious, my lad. I was when I took this commission. An' look at me.

" 'Go somewheres an' sleep it off,' says he to me. 'Remember you're a gentleman now.'

"It's somethin' he'll never be."

The officer wept again.

"Cheer up," said Eadie. "Cheer up. There are people with worse troubles than yours. Look at me."

And he forthwith told the officer the story of his arrest, his escape and his subsequent knowledge of the terrible outcome of the fight at the stable. The lieutenant became instantly sober.

"Yuh say they have your number and name?" he asked.

"I'm pretty sure. The M.P. wrote it down before we started toward town."

"They'll be after you then, sure'n——," decided the officer; "for a witness if nothin' else. I don't see that they can hang anything very serious on yuh, but I know G.C.M.'s an' you don't. If yuh once get in front o' one, you're gone. They ain't got so much sympathy as a stone statue of George Washington."

"But what testimony could they bring in? No one saw the scrap; that is, no Americans."

"Testimony don't mean nothin'. They go to sleep, the whole caboodle of 'em, an' when it's over the judge advocate wakes 'em up an' they all says, 'Hang him.' They'd find yuh guilty anyway fer keepin' them away from their bunks all the afternoon."

"Well, what'll I do?"

"I'd go somewhere where they couldn't get yuh. Hummm. I know where yuh'd be safe and no M.P. would bother yuh."

"Where's that?" asked Eadie.

"Up at the front."

"I was thinking of that myself," said Eadie.

"Well, now," continued the lieutenant, "I ain't got no authority to send yuh up, bein's the old man sent yuh back here, but if yuh was to go on your own hook, I think I could be lookin' the other way when yuh went."

At this moment first call for retreat blew and the lieutenant stood up to go.

" 'To work, to work,' says Major Burke," he quoted. "Good luck to yuh, sergeant, an' if yuh need a witness I'll swear yuh never left camp all day long."

"The poor old bird," thought Eadie as the officer went off to where the men of Eadie's battery were forming. "It must be a tough life for him after all."

The lieutenant was what was known as a temporary officer, a "gentleman by act of Congress" as those old non-coms who were *not* temporary officers called him. Such officers were often snubbed by their superiors, but Eadie never knew of one that was disrespected by his subordinates.

"I'll have some supper," thought Eadie, "and by the time they find out where I am I'll be where they won't dare to come. I can picture the old man letting them pull any one out of his battery."

AFTER supper Eadie and one of the other convalescents, an extra telephone man, went out to the road to smoke and walk about a bit, and discuss their wrongs.

"This is the worst part of the day," said the telephone man. "After supper, when it's too early to go to bed an' there ain't a thing to do but sit around. Ain't this a fine way to fight a war! Stick here behind the lines an' groom horses an' police up. I'm supposed to be a telephone man, an' I ain't had my hand on a wire since we left Coetquidan."

"You ought to get a chance to go up pretty soon," said Eadie. "Telephone men get bumped off pretty regularly."

"Huh!" said the other man unconvinced. "It probably won't come my turn till the war's over. A guy like you that's in the B.C.* detail gets it pretty soft, up where all the excitement is, then back to sleep an' eat an' grow fat for a coupla months."

"Not so soft," laughed Eadie. "The front's a tough place. People get killed up there."

"They never will here, that's a cinch," said the other. "I hope we get paid pretty quick. I been broke for a month. I ain't got that blind I got in Shelby paid off yet."

A blind, by the way, is the Army term for a fine assessed by a court martial. It is taken out of a soldier's pay each month, two-thirds of his pay being taken every month until the blind is paid off. Two-thirds of thirty-three dollars taken away away leaves eleven; less insurance leaves not much.

The two soldiers inhaled their cigarets and looked at the moon. The road was almost deserted, white under the moon's rays. An occasional motorcycle, a truck or two and a few men walking were its only occupants.

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*Battery commander's.

"It's a great night," said Eadie, and he thought thankfully that a man's identification tag bore only his name and serial number, so that it would take the police some time to find out what regiment he belonged to.

When the cigarets had vanished in smoke the two men went back under the trees and so to bed, there being nothing else to do.

The sleeping-arrangements of the regiment were varied. No one seemed eager to put up a shelter tent, for it was very dark under the trees and no lights were allowed, so that the many people that moved about the echelon during the night had no idea of where they were going, and it is ill to have a shelter tent knocked about one's ears when one is asleep.

The drivers, of course, rarely slept at night, for they were taking their caissons up to the battery. When they came back, they fell out of their saddles and slept upon the hay of the picket-line.

There were few dugouts, because dugouts are hard to dig; and why dig one 'way back of the lines? The echelon was out of range anyway. There were one or two though, just big ditches roofed with timbers; but they were half-full of water from the last rain, and no one cared to bail them out.

Near the rolling kitchen of Eadie's battery was a great pile of spare saddles and harness covered with a tarpaulin, and under this a great many men slept. A man had built a shelter of boughs against a tree, assuming that any one about to walk over his shelter would run into the trees. Not bad after all.

The cooks slept under the ration cart. The first sergeant slept in a fourgon. The officers slept in the big headquarters tent.

The greatest number of men, however, gathered themselves in groups for warmth, spread their shelter halves upon the ground and lay down under the blankets and slickers. No matter how badly Davy sent her down, they would not arise, for there was no better shelter from the rain than their slickers would give them.

Eadie slept by himself. He had an extra saddle blanket that he had borrowed from somewhere, and this kept him warm. He slept alone for fear of cooties, trench itch, lice and other extra baggage that some of the men had picked up, and from which the sergeant was still free. The bugs came in the hay, from old blankets and uniforms swiped off the salvage pile, and then leaped playfully from soldier to soldier, like mountain sheep from crag to crag.

"Thank ——," thought Eadie, wriggling among his blankets, "I can have six or seven or eight hours when I don't have to think about a thing, when I can close my eyes and let the world go by and the war go on and not worry about a thing. No wondering if there'll be a bombardment, no wondering if the gas horn will wake me up, no hoping I'll have the same number of feet and legs when I wake as I had when I went to sleep."

As for the remembrance of the morning's happenings, he put it resolutely from his mind, and after gazing a while at the stars and wondering if the moon would shine in his eyes when it was at its height, he slept.

Thud, thud, thud, thud. A man sleeping with his ear to the ground hears many sounds. Thud, thud, thud. Eadie stirred. Clank, rattle, clink, clink.

"Hold back that —— —— team! What the ——'s the matter with you?"

The sergeant raised his head. A train of caissons had turned off the road and was coming through the trees. Eadie hoped they wouldn't run over him. He rose to his knees to be sure. From the sound, he judged the train was going away from him toward E Battery's picket-lines. The horses' feet thudded; and toggle and chain, caisson-lid and limber-axle, all rattled and banged in chorus. Then a long, wailing cry from the man in command.

"Haw-aw-awlt!"

The train stopped, and the horses stamped and snuffed. Men muttered, and the loose trace-toggles clinked. There was a rustling stir like a breeze among leaves, and Eadie lay down again, for the sound was that of men unharnessing. He wrapped the blankets about him, loosened a breeches lace that hurt his leg, and punched his gas mask into a more comfortable shape for a pillow.

Bzzzzz - bzzzzz - bzzzzz. Eadie, already half-asleep, placed the sound—not an uncommon one—as that of an airplane going by. BZZZZZ - BZZZZZ - BZZZZZ. Eadie swore softly to himself. The thing had startled him into full wakefulness. The plane droned overhead, like a gigantic fly buzzing against a window-pane.

"Maybe there's two," thought Eadie. "I wish they'd go away."

He turned on his face and wiggled about to find a comfortable place among the bumps of the ground. There was a rushing sound like the rapid beat of wings.

SWISH-SH-SH-SH! A tremendous cough, a horrible snarling grunt, a crunching grind such as some gigantic monster might make in gnashing his teeth, so loud and so tremendous as utterly to defy description.

The ground shook and trembled. It heaved and lifted under the sergeant's body as if something alive had been buried there. The breath was swept from his lungs as by a blow. He was very nearly stunned by the shock and the unbelievable wave of sound.

BZZZZZ-BZZZZZ-BZZZZZ! Then Eadie knew what was happening.

"An air raid!" he cried aloud. "Air raid! Air raid! Under cover! Air raid!"

As if he needed to warn any one within a mile!

THERE are times when the senses can not register their reactions. It seems that one depends upon the other, and at a time like this, when that of hearing alone can function, the mind calls frantically upon the organs of sight, of touch, of smell, and is doubly distracted when aid is not forthcoming. A second seems a long, long time in such an emergency, perhaps because events follow each other so swiftly.

After Eadie's shout he rose, fully awakened, to his feet, but he saw nothing but the black trunks of the trees and overhead the cold stars and the leafy boughs, and far off, a patch of light where the moon shone through a rift in the trees.

The second explosion came without warning, a mighty blast as if the heavens had been shattered asunder, a frightful crash as of a million plates cast down a mile-long stairway. The force of it picked Eadie from his feet and hurled him to the ground, and this time he stayed there. There were other sounds now—the rill of galloping hoofs, the shriek of mangled horses, the shouts of men. Above it all, high and menacing, was the humming boom from that Thing above the trees. There was a third explosion, and Eadie smelled the reek of the smoke as it curled along the ground.

There is no describing the horror that possessed the sergeant's soul. Man has for ages battled with other men on the ground, and the hurling back and forth of shells and the sowing of bullets is a thing that can be withstood, but never since God first created man in His image has a Thing appeared like that which hovered above that moonlit forest.

Eadie's ancestors, ages and ages before the dawn of history, must have crouched as he did, and have suffered as he suffered, beneath the attacks of man-eating birds, and something of their terror and their fear had come down to him perhaps, stored in a corner of his brain, that now awoke and flamed again at the recollection.

There was more noise on the ground, sounds that swelled in rising volume. A horse tore by the prostrate sergeant, his hoofs thundering, and while the sergeant yet cowered from them, came the crash of a collision and the poor beast's floundering, where he had charged headlong into a caisson. On the other side of the echelon was a confused medley of coughs, moans, thudding, and now and then a scream. It was a fearful sound, as of a struggling mob, as of souls that writhed in torment, a terrible striving against crushing weight, a stamping, crunching, crackling sound, that the tongue can not describe and the mind shrinks from recollecting.

Another bomb. Eadie saw this one burst and heard the whizz and whine of the fragments. A tower of white flame leaped high like a fountain of fire; and borne boldly aloft on its crest was the flaming remnant of the great headquarters tent. Its occupants had long ago gone to a better hole, but all the regiment's records, their requisitions for rations and forage, their casualty reports, reports of ammunition expended, of clothing on hand, of gas casualties, their maps, their charge sheets and records of courts martial, all went in that one blast of fire. The sergeant, under his tree, could have wept.

"The payroll," he thought, "all gone to ——, and now no money for another month."

The forest began to fill with smoke, pungent, heavy and suffocating. A light not that of the moon glimmered among the trees. The hay-pile was on fire.

Eadie lay for some time where he had been hurled by the explosion. The horrible, stifling noise grew less and less, and the crackling of the flames swelled louder. Loose horses galloped about; but there was no sign of man, no sound of voices. The regiment was holding its breath and waiting for the next bomb. There were no more.

The sergeant, straining his ears, heard no booming from overhead, no gigantic buzzing. The visitor had gone, hurrying back to his hangar at Oulchy or Fère-en-Tardenois with the clear conscience of a man who has done a good night's work.

The smoke cleared gradually away. The hay-pile crackled and flamed high, but no one paid it any heed. After a long time lanterns began to glimmer where the medical corps were searching for wounded. Most of the regiment stayed where it was, under wagon and limber, in hole and ditch, for it still feared that the bird hovered overhead. The hay burned to ashes, and the place was dark once more. The horses still roamed about, but they trotted now or walked from place to place, wondering what had become of their guardians. When they approached a certain part of the echelon they shied violently and departed at a dead run, nor stopped until they had gone a great way, when they would halt and stand with lifted head, snorting and trembling.

After a time Eadie got to his feet. There was nothing that could be done in the darkness, and he had no courage to do anything anyway. He consulted his watch, but the hands were invisible in the dark. The moon had gone down, so he decided it must be very near daylight.

The sergeant wondered how many men had been killed, if there was anything left of the echelon and how the batteries would get their ammunition now. He felt very thankful, almost incredulous, that he was still alive and unhurt.

"Golly!" he kept repeating to himself. "Golly!"

At dawn the bolder spirits came forth from their holes. Officers for the most part, and first sergeants.

"Here, soldier," called one of them, a doctor. "Give us a hand with these stretchers, will you?"

"Sure," said Eadie.

Then, hurriedly putting on his blouse and shoes, he ran out to take hold of a stretcher, the other end of which was borne by a sergeant-major.

"Come over this way," said the doctor. "We've got quite a few here."

Bang! The two stretcher bearers jumped. Bang! They made as if to put down their stretcher and retreat.

"Come on," cried the doctor nervously. "What's the matter with you? Hurry up!"

Bang! The two men went on again.

"Who's doing that shooting, do you suppose?" asked the sergeant major.

Eadie shook his head; he had no idea. It couldn't be anything serious. At the next turn among the trees the scene of the shooting came into view. There was a great pile in the center of a glade that took several looks to discover what it was.

It was a scene from hell. The horses of some battery had torn up their picket-line by the roots and had stampeded across the open space with it until they struck the trees on the other side. Here in their frenzy they had wrapped the great rope about the foremost tree and, still held to it by their halter shanks, had wound themselves into a tremendous mass, a writhing pile. It was the sound of this frightful thing that Eadie had heard in the night; and it was from this shambles that the loose horses had shied so violently. Two very white-lipped soldiers were walking about the pile, pistoling such of the poor beasts as still moved. The two stretcher-bearers hurried on.

Eadie and the sergeant-major bent their backs above a loaded stretcher.

"Hup!" said the sergeant-major, and they straightened up and then started across the echelon to the road, where they were to leave their burden.

"I guess that raid kind of knocked us for a crape," said Eadie.

"It did, you know," agreed the sergeant-major. "Look at the hole where the tent was!"

There was a deep crater there, its sides bitten and torn as by the erosion of many rainstorms. There were little slivers of metal and some larger chunks, plainly visible in the sides of the pit. The dirt had fallen all about in shovelfuls, and the stones and bits of wood that it contained ground under the men's hobnails.

"You won't have anything to do now," said Eadie, "with the records all gone."

"Nothing to do till tomorrow," answered the other man. "Nothing to do but lug stretchers and bury dead horses."

THEY went by a number of men who sadly scraped one another with sticks.

"I wonder what happened to them," remarked Eadie.

When he and the sergeant-major had added their stretcher to a row at the side of the road they returned and paused to converse with the scraping men. These last were plastered thickly with wet, slimy, yellow-brown mud.

"Where'd you get all the mud?" asked the sergeant-major.

One of the scrapers pointed. There was a ditch there that had been meant for a trench. Steps went down one end of it, like the steps into a swimming-pool, and disappeared under brown water. In the water a man waist deep floundered about, now bending over and groping under water with one hand, now standing up to swear. This man was very wet, and little bits of mud fell from the trench wall, splashing water into his eyes. Eadie and his companion looked over the trench at the man in the water.

"Fishin'?" queried the sergeant.

The man in the trench cast water at them by striking the surface with the heel of his hand, so they went away.

"He lost his shoe in there," explained one of the muddy men. "We was in that place all night, an' I'm tellin' yuh we put in a tough time! I ain't never gonna get dry."

The stretcher-bearers toiled on. There were not a great many wounded, but it took quite a while to dress their hurts and then carry them out to where an ambulance could get them. The job was longer than it should have been because many of the wounded lay among the undergrowth and either would not or could not call for aid, so that the sergeant and his companion had to hunt for them.

They ran out of stretchers after a while, which made it necessary to lift a man on, carry him to the road, lift him off again and then go back for more with the stretcher, instead of laying him down stretcher and all.

"I don't know how they're going to get those men out if they haven't got stretchers to put 'em on," said the sergeant-major.

"That's right," agreed Eadie. "You've got to have a stretcher to put a man in an ambulance with. Maybe the ambulances will bring some more up. It's time they got here now anyway."

The two men entered the woods again and began to prowl among the undergrowth. There were many slickers lying about, and shelter halves and blankets, all wrinkled and pressed where they had been slept on. There was a lot of hay scattered about in wisps, for one of the bombs had struck directly in the center of the hay-pile. Eadie carried the stretcher, and finally he rested it against a tree.

"I think we got 'em all," he said. "Let's leave this thing here anyway, and then if we find any one we can come back and get it. I'm sick of carrying it around."

The sergeant-major, who was a little in advance, made no reply. He had come to a halt and was peering at something through the bushes. He turned about with a very queer face and made a sign to Eadie to be quiet. Then he turned back again.

Eadie stopped, his heart pounding. He thought sadly that his gun was still with his blankets, wrapped in his puttees to keep off rain.

The sergeant-major buried his face in his hands; then he dropped to the ground and weakly waved his hand to Eadie. The sergeant, his mind all wondering, ran up and dropped beside the other man. The latter still kept his face buried, but he pointed feebly forward; and Eadie, cautiously parting the bushes, looked through, his flesh shrinking and every sense recoiling from the prospect of what he was about to see.

Eadie looked into a small opening in the forest, a tiny glade surrounded by brush and just beginning to shine under the sun's rays. In the center of the glade was a small fire; and about the fire, crouching close to it, hunkered about in a circle, were four men, shamelessly naked, stark and gleaming. Eadie could see their bare backs quivering as they shivered in the morning chill. The sergeant-major made a strangling noise. Eadie looked at him, unable yet to understand the scene.

"It's Bull," husked the sergeant-major, "and the adjutant."

Then he put his head down again, and his shoulders heaved. A slow grin crossed Eadie's face. The lieutenant colonel, the adjutant and two strange officers, warming their cold shins. They must have run from their quarters in the headquarters tent at the first alarm and spent the rest of the night in the bushes. The sergeant-major began to crawl away, and Eadie followed him. When they were at a safe distance the two stood up.

"How come they're naked?" asked Eadie. "They don't sleep raw, do they?"

The sergeant-major hugged himself and tried to speak, but laughter prevented.

"They sleep in pajamas," he said finally, "and I know why they took 'em off. Come here."

He led the way to where an escort wagon was drawn off a small path, a short way into the bushes. Beneath the escort wagon was a hole about two feet wide and four or five feet long. Eadie looked a question.

"It's the supply company's manure pile," explained the sergeant-major. "They ain't finished it yet, and they pulled the wagon over the top so that no one would fall down it. It's right where a man would come from the big tent if he ran this way."

"And they crawled under the wagon and then fell down the hole," cried Eadie.

He grinned again.

"Well, it's about time they put on their clothes," he said.

The other man gave several whoops.

"Every stitch they had was in that tent, an' it's all gone ——ward. They'll have to sit around like that all day. It'll break Bull's heart. He can't come out and bawl out a soul!"

The two men indulged in hearty laughter; then they went back to look for more wounded.

"I know a man," remarked Eadie, thinking of the lieutenant that Bull had insulted, "that will enjoy hearing of this. I'll tell him the first chance I get."

This thought led him to remember that he was supposed to go back to the battery position that morning, and it occurred to him that if he were going at all he had better be on his way. There would be a great deal of labor performed that day, and Eadie felt that his order that said he should do no work would be small protection.

A young soldier passed, a shovel over his shoulder. He sang softly to himself:

"Good morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip, with your hair
cut just as short as mine;
Good morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip, you're surely
looking fine.
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust;
If the boche don't getcha, then the M.P.s must.
So good morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip, with your hair
cut just as short as,
Your hair cut just as short as, your hair cut just
as short as mine."

"Where are you going?" asked the sergeant-major.

"Buryin' guys," said the singer.

"What are you so cheerful about?"

"Cause I ain't bein' buried myself."

EADIE maintained silence. The singer had sung of the Military Police, and the sergeant remembered why it was that he must flee away that morning. All his apprehensions of the day before, that he had forgotten in the excitement of the raid, returned tenfold. He sank down upon the trunk of a tree that had been overturned by the explosion of the bomb. The sergeant-major, sighing heavily, joined him.

"Aint war ——!" remarked the sergeant-major, inspecting his hands where blisters were beginning to make their appearance.

Eadie said nothing.

"I wish I was the lucky guy that's going home," continued the sergeant-major.

"What do you mean 'home'?" asked Eadie.

"There are two men from this regiment going home as instructors," said the other man.

"I heard something like that last night," said Eadie, "but I thought it was a rumor."

"'Tain't; I saw the order."

Eadie remembered that all rumors are started by some one who either saw the order or who knows a guy that works in headquarters, but out of respect for his companion he did not say so.

"There's lots of rumors flying around," he remarked instead. "You never know what to believe."

"That's right," agreed the other man. "I heard down-town last night that the frogs killed an M.P."

He paused while he hunted for cigaret papers. He found none

"Got any papers?" he asked.

"No," said Eadie.

"Ah, well, I can't smoke then. I was telling you about the rumor. Well, they were all sweat up over it. And what made it worse was Lieutenant Marks saw a frog smoking a pipe that had been swiped off him a couple of days ago, and he tried to take it away from him and the frog gave him a *savaty*, or whatever they call it, and there was a riot over that. How do you suppose that frog got the looey's pipe?"

"Uh!" grunted Eadie. "I bet that's the

pipe I found. I gave it to a frog. It's lucky I did. Some one would have seen me smoking it and had me pinched for a thief. I'm playing in luck these days!"

"Let's be going," said the sergeant-major. "The quicker we get at it, the quicker it's done. I wonder how Bull and his gang are going to get clothes. I hope they don't get any for a week."

"I think we're going to eat after a while," said Eadie, rising to his feet and looking at some chow guns across the echelon that were smoking cheerily, "and I must say that I'm pleasantly surprized."

"So'm I," said the sergant-major.

The sun rose higher and warmed the forest with its rays. Things never look so bad in the daylight, anyway. The bombs hadn't done a great deal of damage. The hay-pile was wrecked, a lot of horses were killed, a few men hurt, not so many as one would expect, and the headquarters tent was destroyed. It was all in the game, thought the survivors, and determined not to let the memory of the night's horrors spoil their breakfast. A good breakfast of bacon and beans, washed down with good old Army chicory and wood, is a wonderful nerve tonic.

After breakfast Eadie sought out his friend the lieutenant and, having informed him gleefully of the lieutenant-colonel's ill fortune, told him that he, the sergeant, was about to go over the hill and rejoin his battery.

"There is talk of this killin' of the M.P.," said the lieutenant, "but nothin' you can put your finger on. They all heard it from some one else. They'll be smellin' around all the bivouacs in the area today, though, so you'd best be takin' a *pasear*. So long as you stay on the lines they won't bother you."

"But how about when the outfit gets relieved?"

"Eadie, my boy, when you've been in the Army as long as I have you'll take care of today and let tomorrow do its own worryin'. There's lots of things may happen to a feller while he's at the front. Go on up to the battery now and keep your nose dry and don't be downhearted. Yuh may get killed, and then that'll settle everything."

Thereupon Eadie grinned, and the two struck hands. The sergeant went out through a path in the woods to avoid meeting any one who might question him; and, having arrived on the other road that went in the direction of Viffort, Malmaison and la Maison Rouge, he struck out sturdily toward the front. He had put on his puttees, belted on his pistol and slung a small cloth bag, called a *musette*, over his shoulder.

He took no blankets. They would be too much of a burden if he should have to walk all the way, and when he got to the battery position he could get plenty.

He had not walked half a kilometer when he hailed a truck and requested a ride. Permission was cheerfully given, and he climbed in beside the driver.

"How far up you going?" Eadie inquired.

"Courboin," answered the driver.

"Good enough," said Eadie. "That'll take me about where I want to go."

They continually passed evidences of the fury of the bombardment that preceded the German drive of several days before.

"Look at that Y.M.C.A. hut," cried Eadie, pointing to a portable building beside the road, one end of it torn away where a shell had gone in and then come out again.

"Huh!" grunted the driver, shfting gears for a grade. "Good enough fer 'em."

They passed a field hospital, a line of ambulances drawn up off the road and the tent wards half-concealed under the trees. It appeared that this hospital was but newly arrived, for men were still pounding in tent-stakes, and two or three were setting up a water-bag, a great sack, like an enlarged cow's bag, with a number of nickel faucets protruding from the lower end in place of teats. This was filled with water to the amount of ten or twenty gallons; and, several shovelfuls of chlorin having been added, the thirsty drivers and the thirstier wounded would have drinking-water ready to hand.

"How come a hospital so close to the front, do you suppose?" asked Eadie.

"I betcha they're gettin' ready to pull off a counter-attack," said the driver. "Hey, where the —— d'yuh think yuh are with them caissons; on a parade ground?"

Thus to a line of caissons, who refused to pull over to the right to let the truck-driver by. The caisson-drivers, bearded and red-eyed, sleepless probably for several nights, glowered silently as the truck roared by, ducking their heads from the dust.

"Them guys ain't got the sense —— gives a goose," remarked the truck-driver. "Yep, as I was sayin', I betcha they pull a counter-attack. Looks that way from the stuff I been carryin'. Shovels 'n' iron rations 'n' rifle ammunition."

He whistled violently at a French soldier, back from leave perhaps, for he was hung all about with bulging bags. The French soldier took to the ditch precipitately, and the truck brushed the hindermost bag in passing.

"Where'd yuh think yuh are?" cried the driver. "To home? Dig out your ears!"

"*Ah! Bougre de bécasse!*" cried the French soldier and bit his thumb at them as the truck roared by.

"They can't be going to pull a counter-attack," said Eadie, rolling and bouncing about on the seat like a pea on a knife. "This division hasn't got forty per cent. of its strength left."

"I don't know nothin' about that," said the driver. "All I'm tellin' yuh is what I know. I'll betcha we start a drive before tomorrow morning."

THE truck passed a traffic post, and Eadie held his breath and tried to appear at ease; but he could feel that big M.P.'s hand on his sleeve and hear his rough voice say—

"Come outta that truck, you; we wantcha!"

While he yet shook inwardly they were by and bumping along the last stretch to the front. There were shell-holes in this road; the brush along the sides was scarred and torn, and Eadie wondered if it was still getting iron rations from Germany. He debated with himself whether if a shell should whistle, he would stay in the truck and take a chance on being hit, or jump out and take a chance on breaking his neck.

The truck rumbled by another cross-roads; and here beside the road there were five big men, the red and black brassard of the police upon their arms, and four other men, dirty, dejected and disarmed, sullen and afraid.

"Straggler post," thought Eadie. "That's the last line of M.P.'s, thank Heaven."

A straggler post was a place near some main road going back from the front, where the police collected chips thrown up by the tide of war. Men would leave their units, either by accident or otherwise, and drifting by the force of gravity away from the front, bumming a meal here and a handout there, they would arrive sooner or later at a straggler post; and after that, —— help them.

The truck went more slowly now, and finally at a bend in the road Eadie dismounted.

"Much obliged," he cried; and, waving his hand at the disappearing truck, he followed a foot-path across the fields.

There were plenty of shell-holes about, each surrounded by a circle of gray grass, discolored by the high explosive. By some of these holes would be pieces of metal as large as a man's hand. Eadie thought at first that the force of the shell bursting had not been great enough to throw these pieces any distance, but then he decided that they had been hurled straight up into the air and had fallen back again to their starting-place.

Eadie's battery was in a tiny grove on the edge of a marsh. The guns were on the far side of the grove, where they had an uninterrupted view of a field of wheat. The officers lived in a grass hut under the side of a causeway that crossed the marsh, and it was to this grass hut that Eadie hastened. The captain was within in his stocking feet, manufacturing a cigaret.

"Hello," he cried as Eadie entered the low doorway. "You're just the man I've been wanting to see."

Then he checked himself.

"How's this?" he inquired more sternly. "I sent you back to the echelon for a rest. Who gave you permission to leave?"

"I wanted to come back to the front," said Eadie nobly. "I couldn't stand it back there; it was too dull."

The captain licked the edge of his cigaret, folded it down and then rolled it, regarding Eadie with sidelong glance the while. Then the captain grinned.

"Don't be misled, sergeant," he said, "by the fact that I have green eyes. Green in my eye doesn't mean a thing. See these bars? It took me ten years to get them, and I did three of those years in the ranks. Now what chased you away from the echelon?"

"I got into a jam with the police," said Eadie with a red face; and forthwith he told the whole of the story of the sad affair at the French cavalry stable.

The captain grinned.

"I wouldn't worry about that a bit. The only thing they might want you for would be a witness, and you're too valuable right now to let you out for anything like that."

"But how about when we get relieved?"

The captain dragged on his cigaret.

"Maybe we can make arrangements to leave you on the front," said he.

Eadie groaned audibly, and the captain laughed aloud.

"You don't mean you don't like the front?" he asked.

"I'm not crazy about it," said Eadie, "nor the rear either. They raided the echelon last night and knocked the place for a gool."

"Any hurt?"

"Well, a good number, I guess."

The sergeant smiled pleasantly.

"The headquarters tent was blown up, and the lieutenant-colonel and his gang fell down a stable pit and had to skulk around in the bushes because they'd lost all their clothes."

The captain turned his back so that Eadie would not see him laugh. After a while he turned about with a sober face.

"Now," said he, "I'll tell you something cheering. Go out and saddle yourself a horse and report to Lieutenant Hendricks. He's got to find us a new gun position, and he'll be glad to have you along. I expect we'll have to move up to cover a crossing of the river."

"I'm getting plenty of action," thought Eadie as he climbed the side of the causeway to the road again. "Cover a crossing, huh? I guess that means a counter-shove after all."

Eadie found the two horses already saddled and the lieutenant adjusting his stirrups. "Hello, sergeant," he said. "Are you going with me?"

"Yessir," said Eadie, eying one of the horses with doubt. "Are you going to ride that horse?"

"I hope to," said the officer.

"Why, that's that fearful goat they call Dumb-Bell. He'll take you up in front of a boche machine gun and then balk. He held up the advance of the whole Third Division coming up from the railhead. He cheats the glue factory every day he lives."

"Well," said the officer, "he's the only horse there is. I like him. He responds to kindness."

"The only thing he responds to is a cigaret butt applied to his hide. They sent him up here from the echelon hoping he'd get killed."

"Sergeant, don't talk so much," said the officer wearily. "Mount up and let's go. You're worse than an old-maid aunt. Be thankful you don't have to walk."

Two hours later the lieutenant and the sergeant drew rein at the gateway of a farm that was almost on the edge of the hills that sloped to the Marne. This farm was a regimental post of command and for such an important place was strangely silent.

"Do you want to stay and hold the horses or do you want to go in and see if there's any one home?" asked the lieutenant.

"I'll stay out here," answered Eadie. "I've been in these farms before. The yard is full of dead horses and the cellar full of stiffs."

The lieutenant went in alone. Very shortly he returned bursting with excitement and silently climbed into the saddle.

"What's the matter?" asked the sergeant.

"Very important. I must go right back and report. Really this is serious indeed."

The lieutenant clapped spurs to his horse, but the beast continued to eat grass, nearly throwing the officer over its head as its neck shot out toward the weeds by the road. Eadie had moved out but, seeing the officer's predicament, turned and came back again. Thump, thump, thump, went the officer's legs against the horse's ribs. Dumb-Bell continued to eat grass. When his head was pulled up, he shot it out again, and the rider must needs let go the reins or be hurled into the ditch.

"—— this horse!" cried the officer. "Crack him over the rump, will you?"

Eadie dismounted; and, picking up a piece of limb that had been torn from its parent tree by a shell, he belabored the horse, who, thus urged, moved out.

"What do you suppose is the matter with him?" asked the officer as they proceeded back along the way they had come.

"He always does that when you're in a rush," said Eadie. "What happened in the farm? Everybody dead?"

"Let's hurry," cried the officer, bumping up and down in the saddle and having a hard time to keep his helmet from falling over his eyes.

"Aw, what's he so cagey about?" thought Eadie. "Are you looking for a first-aid station?" he called. "I know where there is one if that's what you want."

THE officer made no reply, but bounded steadily along. Dumb-Bell, seeing a particularly succulent bit of grass just then, went toward it immediately, like a hungry fish darting at a fly. As the grass was at right angles to his course, this made him veer suddenly and the lieutenant took a large bite of the dust. The sergeant reined up.

"—— that horse," said the officer, getting up and spitting the dust from his mouth. "He turned so quickly he caught me off my guard! I won't ride him any more. He's a treacherous beast. He was so quiet coming out!"

"That's his way," said Eadie, grinning. "He waits until he's a good ways from home before he does his stuff. If he did it too soon he'd get left on the picket-line and wouldn't get any grass."

"Well, I can't bother with him any more," said the officer. "Sergeant, give me your horse."

A joke is a joke, but a sergeant must not laugh at an officer. Eadie's face was sad enough as he dismounted and walked over to where Dumb-Bell placidly ate grass. The lieutenant slapped his spurs into his new mount's sides, and they went down the road at a good pace.

Eadie, who prided himself on being a good rider, mounted Dumb-Bell.

"Come on," cried he, "you've got a man riding you now."

By tremendous exertion he raised Dumb-Bell's head from the grass and applied his heels to Dumb-Bell's ribs. Dumb-Bell remained *in status quo*. Eadie had no spurs, but his hobnails had iron-shod heels, and these he worked vigorously, so that a hollow, booming noise developed. No movement, save a sudden thrust of the neck, by which Dumb-Bell freed himself from the restraint of the rein and fell to cropping the grass once more.

"All right," thought Eadie. "I'll fix you."

He dismounted and, leaving the reins on the horse's neck, retired a few feet, but not so far that he could not seize the reins if Dumb-Bell should start suddenly homeward. The horse continued to eat in peace.

The sergeant looked about for a rock to throw. There were no trees anywhere near, and he regretted that he had thrown away the limb with which he had belabored the horse in the first place. The lieutenant was now but a speck at the far end of the road, and as Eadie watched him he topped a rise and plunged from sight down the other side. The sergeant was alone.

The road stretched white and shining from one horizon to the other. It was deserted. On either side were fields of wheat with tiny groves of trees rising like islands from a yellow sea. Overhead a blue sky, but no aviator droned his way across it.

Eadie felt a strange chill. This place was a battlefield. Not more than a mile away was a gaily colored hillside, just visible over the edge of the farthest field. This hill was in enemy territory. Maybe the boche were watching him now, preparing to cast a shell at him for luck.

The sergeant listened for sounds of firing. None. No gunfire, no machine-gun rattle, no rifle whacking. And what had the officer seen in the farm?

Eadie looked about for some sign of American troops. The fields shimmered under the bright sunlight, but no living thing moved. The sergeant longed for company.

His eye lighted on the placid Dumb-Bell at the same moment that his foot struck against a stone. Eadie seized the stone and hurled it with all his might at the feeding horse. Chock! The stone rebounded from the horse's ribs. Dumb-Bell, giving a grunt, tossed his head high in air and departed down the road before Eadie, though he gave a mighty leap, could seize the reins.

"There!" said the sergeant. "I knew he'd do that. Now I've *got* to go back to the battery."

So he set off down the road with a lighter heart. It always gives a man a cheerful feeling to be going away from the front.

A mile of walking along the road brought Eadie to the gate of another farm. He met no one save a French cyclist, who refused to answer the sergeant's hail. This farm was certainly inhabited, for American soldiers ran in and out, a motorcycle and side car were parked under a tree and a platoon of French infantrymen were eating sausage in the shade of the wall.

Eadie entered the court-yard. Well, this was a good place to rest. Eadie approached the rolling kitchen that stood under the shed and requested a cup of coffee of the cook. The cook presented it to him.

"What's all the excitement?" asked Eadie, nodding toward the great number of soldiers that tore in one door and out of the other and were continually rushing into the court-yard from outside.

There was a battalion post of command

in that farm, but that would not be sufficient cause for so much activity.

"I hear the boche have pulled out," remarked the cook. "I hope we follow 'em right away. Then I won't have to get no supper."

Eadie marveled on this as he drank his coffee. If the boche had pulled out, then there would be no necessity for moving up the guns.

The cook thrust his finger into a can of corn syrup; and, having licked it off, he looked at the sky and burst into song.

"What kind o' shoes you goin' to wear?
Hawbnail shoes, hawbnail shoes;
I'm bound to wear them doggone hawbnail shoes.
Yes, yes, yes, indeed, I'm a gonna join the regular Army;
Yes, yes, yes, indeed, I'm a gonna go to war.

"What kind o' hat you goin' to wear?
A iron hat, a iron hat,
I'm bound to wear a doggone iron hat.
Yes, yes——"

The song ended abruptly, and a messkit flew through the air to crash against the house wall. The cook snorted.

"Wouldn't that break your heart," he cried. "Ain't no officer goin' to keep his —— messkit in my bacon can; I don't care if he's a brigadier general!"

The cook then returned to his song and his inspection of the forward part of the rolling kitchen. The foregoing song, sung to the old negro tune of "Golden Slippers," and intoned through the nose, aided by the acoustic properties of a sheet-iron stove, gives a very fine effect.

Eadie finished his coffee.

"I'd better call up my old man," said he to the cook, "because he was expecting to move up his guns, and he may want to know about this. You sure the boche have pulled out now?"

"Sure, I'm sure," said the cook scornfully. "They been running wild round here for the last coupla hours. We got it from the 30th headquarters. They had a patrol over since daylight."

"Where's a phone?" asked the sergeant.

"In that first door," said the cook, indicating the door to what had been an old tool-shed.

Eadie went in and asked the man in front of the switchboard to be connected with Home Run, which was the code name of his battery.

"You sit down an' keep your shirt on," said the operator. "Everybody's comin' in here hollerin' for a rush call, and half the lines are busy an' the other half don't answer."

"I didn't ask for a rush call," said Eadie.

"Well, I'm tellin' yuh, so you won't."

Eadie had time to finish a cigaret before he got his connection; and as soon as he had made himself known, the captain, at the other end, gave a wild howl.

"The boche are gone, and you haul yourself up to the river and find a bridge."

"Lieutenant Hendricks—" began Eadie.

"Never mind Lieutenant Hendricks. We've got orders to move forward. You find a bridge or make one."

"My horse——"

The captain became incoherent.

"Wow!" said Eadie, removing the receiver from his ear. "I'll get an earache!"

Then he spoke into the other end of the thing—the military phone had the transmitter and receiver in one piece—but the captain had broken the connection.

"Compree that!" cried Eadie to the telephone operator. "The old man tells me to find a bridge. A bridge where? All the bridges there are across that brook you can put in your eye."

The operator continued to pull plugs from holes and insert them in others.

"You got your call?" he asked with a fishlike eye.

"Yes," said Eadie.

"Then get the —— out of here," requested the operator.

ON THE south bank of the Marne, up-river from Château Thierry, is a small town called Blesmes, known to the Americans as Bless-Me. Eadie arrived in the principal street of this town after a long and dusty walk. The day was becoming warm, and the sergeant thought regretfully of a horse called Dumb-Bell. Three kilometers is not far, but still, more than a man likes to walk when he has the prospect of a hard day's work ahead of him.

On the way down Eadie had passed the farm where the lieutenant had first halted. Out of curiosity he peered in. Fronting the gate was a huge sign made of the side of some kind of box. On it were the words—

Forward Mail for this Outfit to Berlin.

There was nothing else in the farm but silence. The sergeant knew he ought to laugh, but there was something so uncanny about the silent farm and the deserted fields and the strange sign that he felt his spine tingle.

"No wonder the looey beat it," he muttered.

Then he beat it himself, walking very rapidly.

Eadie had gone into Blesmes because he was familiar with the place. Long before, almost two weeks ago, when his regiment had first come into that sector, Eadie had gone into Blesmes with an officer to see if they could find a house that could be used as an observation post.

Gland, a town that was one of the battery's targets, was almost directly across the river. Just after sunset they had walked down a back street, observing the garret windows of the houses that looked toward the river and hoping to find one with its shutters open. They could not take one with closed shutters, for the enemy had men who did nothing but check up on window shutters and doors, and one of either that was opened after having been shut, was immediately plugged with lead or had a shell fitted into the aperture. The Americans did window-checking themselves, with this difference; that when they discovered an erstwhile closed shutter open they knocked the whole house down, window and all.

Eadie and his officer at last found a house with a shutter hanging. It had been closed; but a piece of shell or a bullet had torn away the hinge, and one end drooped. The two entered the house by the simple method of jimmying the cellar door and had then mounted to the garret, having all the feelings of burglars. The room they sought was a kind of servants' room, under the eaves, and when they were half-way up the stairs that led to it they heard what sounded like a rat scurrying.

They halted, and the lieutenant brought his flashlight to bear. It shone upon the panels of the door, which seemed to quiver. Eadie and the lieutenant went rapidly down the stairs again. The scuttling of the rat was the sound of machine-gun bullets entering the window with the hanging shutter and going out through the panels of the door. They could see the holes the bullets made, and the floor was quite littered with splinters.

Eadie had had quite a shock that evening, when he found himself in the main street of a sizable town, a street lined with majestic trees, to which had been nailed strand upon strand of barbed wire, a street that was as solemn and lonely and still as any graveyard in the dark of the moon. The white houses on either side looked down spectrally.

It was a chilling place. A town that was dead. The hand of war had been laid upon it, for its inhabitants had all departed; but the hand had not closed, and the town had not been crushed. One would never know that the enemy were just across the river save for the wire and strips of burlap hung up between the houses to prevent troops moving in the streets from being seen by the enemy.

While the officer and the sergeant had stood there, awed and appalled by this new experience of war, a ghastly green light had been reflected from a house-wall. A flare had been fired by some one on the river bank. Immediately a machine gun rattled, far off down the river. The two shuddered and, being of one mind, gave up trying to find the observation post and went home as swiftly as they might.

Now, however, all this was changed. The houses still looked vacantly down into the street. They showed signs of wear; plaster was scattered about; doorways were open; there were holes in those white walls. Some French soldiers ran about, cutting the wire from the trees to permit the passage of vehicles. The sun shone brightly, and the charnel-house atmosphere was gone.

"Now where will I go?" thought Eadie.

Before him lay a road which he knew must end at the river's edge. The road to the right went to Crézancy, a town full of dead Germans, and the road to the left went to Chierry.

"I guess I'll let George go down to that river," thought Eadie. "Fritz may have retired, and then again he may not have. He wasn't in a retiring mood the last time I saw him."

There was a hoarse cry and the creak of axles. Eadie turned and beheld a long steel boat resting upon a species of wagon and drawn by six horses. The horses were in charge of French soldiers, the long-mustached, bearded type that the French used in their heavy artillery, their engineers and other semi-non-combatant troops.

"Hah!" thought Eadie. "The makings of a bridge! All I need to do is to follow that pontoon, and there will be my bridge."

But why follow the pontoon? Why not ask the drivers where it was going and then telephone the battery? Much time would thus be saved, and the information would be received with wonderful promptness.

"Hah!" thought Eadie again. "A mission accomplished within an hour after I get the order. When you want anything done, ask me!"

"Hey!" he cried to the French. "Hey, up there! Say, my old guide-post, where dost thou go with that apparatus?"

The French called everything an *appareil;* that is to say, an apparatus.

"To the river's edge," answered the driver gruffly.

"Ah, but where?"

"Ask the adjutant, I do not know, me."

Eadie saw no sign of any adjutant, so he shifted his *musette* to a more comfortable position and prepared to follow the pontoon.

The wagon with its load continued straight on across the main street of the town and followed a road down through the fields toward the river. After a way this road ended abruptly.

When the wagon reached the end of the road the drivers stopped, dismounted and retired to the shade of some trees, where they produced food and proceeded to eat, cutting hunks of bread and sausage with their pocket knives, and then spearing the piece that had been cut off and carrying it to their mouths on the knife's point. The knife thus served also as a fork.

Eadie decided that they were waiting for the rest of the pontoons. If he had had a horse he might have searched up and down the river for a bridge, but it was too hot and he was too weary to do it on foot. Meanwhile he decided to go forward and have a look at the river. He had never seen it before save through field glasses.

ACROSS the fields he went, over the railroad track and so to the river-bank, where there was a shallow trench, upon the parapet of which sat a company of infantry, bayonets fixed, full pack, and panoplied for war. The infantry looked gloomy, for several yards of water separated them from the other shore, and there was no way of crossing.

Eadie felt that the infantry were in rather an exposed position, for if there should by any chance be a stray boche across the brook he would have a very easy time picking his meat from among those doughboys. While Eadie meditated on whether he should go near and make himself known or stay where he was and be safe, the officer with the doughboys espied him and called to him.

"Hey, come here!"

Eadie drew near.

"Do you know anything about this war?" asked the officer.

"A little," replied Eadie.

"Do you know where there's a bridge?"

"I wish I did. There's a pontoon back there that looks as if it intended to be part of one, but you can't build a bridge with only one pontoon."

"What organization are you with?" asked the officer.

"I'm with the 76th Field," answered Eadie. "I've got to find a bridge that will take the guns across."

The officer spat and gazed across the river. Then he rose to his feet, revealing six feet or so of muscle, and looked dreamily across the farther fields to where the highway curved and disappeared behind the first houses of Gland.

"I'd like to get over there," he said, "and do a little *auskommen* stuff on those Jerries. Do you speak French?" he continued, turning to the sergeant.

"Sure do," replied the sergeant, who, being of French ancestry, spoke it very well.

"Then let's have a parley with those frogs and see how long we'll have to wait for a bridge. Just look after things, will you?" said the officer to a sergeant, and then he and Eadie went back to where the wagon with the pontoon was halted under the trees.

"Do you know where the bridge is to be built?" asked Eadie of one of the French soldiers.

The soldier shrugged.

"Got a cigaret?" Eadie asked the officer. "If you have, give him one and then maybe we can get some information out of him."

The officer complied. The French soldier seized the cigaret gleefully and looked about to see if he were observed. His companions all slept. Thereupon the Frenchman lighted his cigaret after great rubbing of his hand against the wheel of his *briquet* pocket lighter) and inhaled joyfully a huge lungful.

"Ah, the bridge!" he cried, letting a cloud of smoke float heavenward. "It is of the bridge you speak. What bridge?"

"Why, name of a pipe!" cried Eadie. "The bridge for which you have brought the pontoon."

"The pontoon? Ah, yes, the pontoon. We have brought it here, yes. What then?"

"Does not one build a bridge with a pontoon?" cried Eadie. "Where are the rest of them? Who is in command? When is the bridge to be ready?"

"What's all this about?" asked the officer, who, of course, had not understood a word.

Eadie waved to him to be patient.

The French soldier inspected the end of his cigaret.

"It is good tobacco, the American," he said, heaving a sigh.

The sergeant likewise sighed.

"Tell me, my old one," he said patiently, "where are the rest of the pontoons?"

"I know not," said the Frenchman. "They are perhaps on the way. Perhaps they are halted. It is the hour of refreshment."

"Ah, but holy blue!" cried Eadie. "We, the Americans, wait for a bridge to cross the Marne to pursue the boche, to make the battle. There is need for haste."

The French soldier sighed again.

"One is at liberty," said he wearily, "to make a bridge oneself!"

"If you were a little younger," said Eadie in his own tongue and through gritted teeth, "I could just knock you for enough brick kitchens to supply a division."

"What's he say?" asked the officer impatiently.

"He says we can build our own bridge."

"Why not?" queried the officer as if he had not thought of it before. "We might as well."

"What can we build it out of?"

"That remains to be seen. Let's go back," and the officer started to hurry back to his men.

"I don't know why I should get mixed up with a lot of doughboys," thought Eadie, "but I might as well stick around and see where that pontoon goes. I don't crave to wander around these towns a hot day like this."

"Come on," cried the officer. "Aren't you going to help?"

So Eadie hastened on.

"Unsling your packs, men," cried the officer. "Non-coms front and center."

The men unslung their packs, and the non-commissioned officers gathered about their commander. Eadie judged that the officer was a lieutenant. He wore no insignia of rank, but there was no doubting he was an officer, for he had the clothes and the bearing and he was obeyed as one having authority. There were not enough men for him to be a captain.

"Now then," began the officer. "We can't find a bridge and we must get across, so the only thing we can do is to make one. We can't all swim across because we'd never be able to get our rifles and packs over. So, that being the case, I'm open to suggestions."

There was a long silence; then up and spoke a corporal:

"Couldn't we cut down some trees and throw 'em across and then plank 'em over?"

"We could," said the officer gravely, "if we had a week's time and a bunch of axes."

"Why not get a boat and ferry the men over?" asked Eadie.

There was a general laugh at this, both because Eadie was an artilleryman and the infantry looked down on him, and for some other reason.

"We were sent out," explained the officer, "to locate and seize a bridge in order that the regiment might cross. You see there are still men in the Third Division who think all the bridges on the Marne are still intact."

"All the —— fools weren't killed off in the drive after all," said an infantry sergeant, at which there was another laugh.

There was one, however, a corporal, who bore upon his face the marks of long service, and who appeared to have grown gray in barrack and camp.

"You was speakin' of boats," said he to Eadie quietly. "Where would you get this here boat at?"

"Why," said Eadie, "the river is full of 'em. There used to be a place around here that rented out boats for people to go rowing in or take their girls out or go fishing. When my outfit was back of Mezy I went across in one a couple of times on patrol."

"When we was in the islands," said the gray-haired corporal, "we used to often make bridges outta them little native boats. We could git some o' them boats and a few planks and some rope, and there's your bridge."

This proposal was not received with any great enthusiasm.

"How yuh gonna get boats enough fer a bridge?"

"Gee, them little rowboats wouldn't hold up a burro!"

"I think we oughta go down t' Chatter-Theery; maybe there's a bridge there."

The officer, however, was quite enthusiastic.

"That's a good idea, corporal," he said, "and we'll put it into effect at once. Each corporal take his squad and go hunt for a boat. The sergeants come with me. I know where we can get planking."

SADLY and slowly the doughboys departed, each squad debating among themselves as to where a boat might be found. They all remembered having seen them when they were on sentry duty, some stranded in the rushes, others floating idly down the river. Those that floated did not do so long, for both sides fired at them out of suspicion, and so they soon sank. The boats had all come from a boat-house up river, where they had been rented out in happier days, and whence they had been shoved into the river to prevent the boche from capturing them and using them to cross.

"Now then, sergeants, let's go."

The officer led Eadie and two more sergeants along the river-bank.

"I know just the place we want," said he. "I remembered it from last week. A sniper nearly deprived the United States of a very fine officer there."

They passed places where Americans had had machine-gun nests, hollows in the ground, carpeted with rugs from the houses in the town. In one place that had evidently been a sniper or sentry post was a brocaded armchair, in which the soldier on duty might sit and perform his task of watching the river with ease and comfort.

After a time they arrived at a cluster of small houses or villas, the outlying houses of Chierry. Each of these villas had a Summer house, a small structure on the bank of the river, where the owners of the villas went after supper of a Summer's evening to drink wine and look at the sunset. These houses were built of wood.

"There you are," said the lieutenant, waving his hand. "There's your planking."

The three sergeants regarded the houses sadly.

"You mean for us to tear them Summer houses down?" asked one.

"Sure do unless you can think of some better way to get them apart."

The sergeants looked at each other gloomily, and Eadie stepped forward and gave a half-hearted tug at one of the posts that supported the roof.

"They're pretty solidly built," said he.

"Huh!" said the officer, snorting mightily. "Fine lot of non-commissioned officers! I never believed," he went on, removing his blouse, "in the rule that a non-com should do no work. It makes them think they are too good to get their hands dirty. Solidly built! There's an artilleryman for you! I never knew one that was worth —— room, anyway."

Here the officer, having removed his blouse and tin hat and rolled up his sleeves, advanced upon the house; and, seizing the post with an audible slap, he set his foot against another post and shoved. Crack! Dust flew. Crack! The post gave way at the top, and the roof sagged with a dismal creak. The officer wrapped his arms around another post and gave a terrific wrench. The post came away bodily, and the roof of the house fell in.

"Now," said the officer, "that's the way to take down a house. Now jump in and finish the job."

The sergeants removed their hats and blouses and, using one of the fallen posts as a lever, finished wrecking the house. It took them some time, for the house had been put together to stay.

"Oh, man!" said Eadie, pulling his shirt off and mopping his brow. "This is a fine way to spend an afternoon. I oughtn't to be doing this; I'm on a mission."

He thought of informing the officer of this fact, but it occurred to him that he could s[illegible] the French started to build a pontoon bridge, that he could say the officer had requisitioned his services in an emergency and that as long as he stayed on the river-bank he was safe from unwelcome visitors. The police, for instance. So he decided to stay.

The afternoon wore on, and the sergeants developed blisters on their hands and pains in their backs. They tore down two houses and pried up the planking of the floor with the posts.

"Now be careful of those posts," said the officer. "We want those for side planking. Two houses ought to be enough. Let's start carrying the planks back to the bridge."

This was done, the sergeants toiling along under the hot sun, tormented by the sweat trickling down their noses and doing as little as they could with their hands, for the blisters were beginning to break. For every plank they carried the officer carried two and lashed the men with his tongue the while.

The heat was stifling, and the wheat lay motionless in the burning sun. The planks were hard and the posts heavy, and the nails were always tearing the men's flesh or catching in their clothing. When they got back to where the French still slumbered beneath the trees they found some muddy, tired, dripping scarecrows awaiting them.

"We went clear up around the bend," said the dirtiest of these last, "an' we found some boats an' started to come back with 'em. Well, two of 'em sunk, an' the guys got stuck in the rushes, an' we had a —— of a time pullin' 'em out. And then while we was pullin' 'em out, Corporal Stefanowich came along with his squad an' copped the only boat we had left."

"Where is your boat?" asked the officer.

"Corporal Stefanowich took it," replied the corporal.

"What did I send you out for?"

"Fer boats," answered the corporal, half-puzzled, half-sullenly.

"I don't see that you have accomplished your mission," remarked the officer in a voice that brought a pleasant chill to Eadie, even on that hot afternoon.

"We had a boat," began the corporal; but, noticing that his squad were already beginning to ease away, he saved his breath and followed the other men.

They went back along the river, talking earnestly among themselves.

"Gee," thought the sergeant of artillery, "that man is a horse. I'd like to see him under fire. I bet he'd give you an amusing afternoon."

The next squad were more lucky; they arrived with four boats, two men in each, paddling with their hands and shoving along the banks with improvised poles. They were quite spent with their labors, for they had brought these boats all the way up-river against the current from Château-Thierry. The four boats were placed side by side and lashed together with the men's waist-belts, they having no rope nor any other means of lashing.

More boats were brought in, sufficient to cross the river and more, so that there were boats left over. The lieutenant got into one of these and helped to lash the bridge, to lay on the planking and arrange the poles on the side that kept the planking in place. The men waded about in the mud, waist-deep sometimes in water, their clothes torn with nails and their flesh by the sharp edge of the rushes that grew very thickly there. Some of the planks were too long and some too short; but they managed to make them stay in place, and at last the bridge was very nearly complete.

The lieutenant sent off a runner to guide the battalion to the bridge and, wiping the mud and sweat from his face, expressed himself as pleased. He was quite damp, for his boat had sunk under him and he had been forced to swim ashore. They discovered that two boats in the middle were fast filling with water and pulling the rest under the river with them, so one of the extra boats was hurriedly substituted and a man put in the remaining leaky boat to keep it bailed dry. The sergeants, having brought down the last of the Summer houses, were allowed to resume their shirts and blouses and do nothing but count their blisters.

THE battalion appeared in the distance, and the officer went forward to report to his commanding officer. At this moment the far end of the bridge, tied to the bank with cartridge-belts, broke loose under pressure of the current and started to swing down-stream. Eadie and two infantrymen, being near the bridge, rushed out upon it and so crossed, where, using planks and poles, they shoved the boats back against the bank and made them secure again.

"I'll say this is a work of art," said Eadie, sitting down on the far end of the bridge and inspecting a blister that had just broken. "I hope the whole works doesn't collapse when the outfit is on it."

"It's gettin' on toward evenin'," said one of the infantry. "I don't guess we'll git t' sleep a wink tonight."

"Did you notice if those frogs were still asleep?" asked Eadie. "My outfit can't cross on this bridge, and that pontoon won't be ready before dark. It's four-thirty now. Well, here come the gang; let's get ashore."

The farther bank was very steep, and the three men had to haul each other up. There was a little footpath there, and off to one side a clump of bushes, behind which the enemy had dug holes deep enough for a man to crouch in, and where they had had snipers or listening-posts. The head of the column appeared on the other bank, and a group of officers inspected the bridge.

"What's all that racket?" asked one of the men with Eadie.

Across the river the officers stood up and looked off toward the city. There was a distant rattling, a cackling of hens, the crackling of a wood fire, that rapidly grew until it had the sound of coal being thrown down an iron chute into a cellar.

"It's a boche plane," said the other man. "Can you see it? Ain't they hammerin' the —— out of it!"

"It's coming this way," cried Eadie, "by the sound of those guns, but I can't see it; the sun shines in my eyes."

They listened to the roaring of the machine guns, but had no idea of the location of the plane:

Ummmmmm, Ummmmmm, Ummmmmm.

"I hope they hit it," said Eadie.

"Hey! Look!" cried the three at once.

Eadie knew that sound, that gigantic hum. He had heard it the night before at the echelon, only now it was not so loud. There were confused cries from the opposite bank. Eadie looked up.

There are on the field of battle many terrible sights that strike the blood from the heart. There are many things that meet the eye that make the flesh shrink and the mind sick; but the worst of all perhaps is to look overhead at the belly of an airplane flying quite close to the ground and see the thin black-and-white cross and a fearful head with a grotesque helmet, looking out of the cockpit.

There was a sound as of a ripping sheet. The plane banked around and dived at the men on the other bank. Eadie and those with him took to their heels and leaped into the holes that the boche sentries had used. Here they crouched, their hearts pounding, and listened to the roaring of the plane, the thin ripping of its gun and the ineffectual popping of rifle fire. If there was any other anti-aircraft fire, the roar of the motor drowned it.

Slam! SLAM! Slam! The plane had dropped three bombs. Water leaped into the air and fell splashing in the river, and into the hole where the three men crouched.

Slam! More water, showering like rain. The plane still circled, firing and firing. Plop! Plop! Bang!

"That's shrapnel," cried Eadie. "The anti-aircraft have got after him!"

There was more pattering, but not water this time. It was the shrapnel that was being fired at the plane coming down again. The gun that fired it must be on the road in Blesmes, and the shrapnel was falling almost perpendicularly. If it hit one of the men in the hole it would probably ruin him. Without doubt it was raining on the battalion on the other bank.

Slam! went another bomb, and a great splashing followed the explosion. Perhaps the bomb had torn away a section of the high bank and this had fallen into the river. The shrapnel still burst, but the sound was fainter. The roar of the motor, too, was gone.

Eadie cautiously looked over the edge of his hole. The plane was humming up-river, followed by the little tufts of cotton that the bursting shrapnel made. The other men stood up in their holes.

"Oh, my back!" cried one of them. "Lookut the bridge!"

Eadie leaped out of his hole and walked over to the edge of the bank. There was no bridge to look at, naught but a great mass of splinters and muddy water and the bow of a boat on the farther bank, still held there by a belt. The chips, carried by the current, were already floating down-stream. The boche that threw those bombs had a good eye.

The three soldiers on the far bank of the Marne said no word. Indeed, there was none to be said. They could see a great deal of running about on the other bank, and Eadie was very thankful that he was not over there. He had a good idea of what it must be like.

"Well," said he at last, "I can't get back across the Marne now."

He reflected for some minutes.

"This isn't my scrap anyway," he decided. "I might as well be on my way. This is a good time to go."

"I'm glad we was on this side," remarked one of the other soldiers in thankful tones. "Now we won't have no dead to bury nor no wounded to lug."

"You tell 'em," said Eadie; and, seeing a path that went across the fields to the road, he followed it until he came to the high road and then turned in the direction of Château Thierry.

"I hope there's no boche over here," he thought while a chill wave passed up and down his spine.

But he saw some men in French uniforms moving about farther down the road; and in a little while he came upon an American patrol, who advised him that the boche were over the other side of the hill and that he was quite safe as far as the city.

"Now that's what I call hard luck," said Eadie, speaking aloud to himself. "After all that work and all those blisters and all that sweat, and then a Jerry blows up the bridge. And me stranded on the opposite bank! There must be a bridge somewhere, or that patrol couldn't have got across. Unless they came in boats," he added as an afterthought.

This habit of talking to oneself was quite common among observers, runners, and liaison agents, in fact among all classes of soldiers that had to perform their duty alone. The sound of a voice, even if it were the soldier's own, was very comforting and a great antidote for loneliness, fear and what the French call *cafard*.

The sergeant felt quite cheered and even gay for some unaccountable reason. He took counsel with himself and decided at last that it was because he had a good excuse for remaining away from the battery. He wondered at this for some time, but could think of no reason for feeling elated over the fact unless they had a nice fat detail waiting for him, like going over the top or going on patrol with some infantry organization.

Now from Blesmes to Château Thierry is about six kilometers, a weary walk. In Brâsles he saw some French officers with black velvet tabs on their collars, with pink numbers thereon, indicating that they were engineers. These he approached and of them inquired if there was a bridge that would support artillery.

The officers paused in their conversation and shook their heads.

"There is no bridge yet," said the oldest, who appeared likewise to be the senior, "but we were promised pontoons by four o'clock, and as soon as they arrive the bridge will be built."

"But where will the bridge be?" asked Eadie.

"At Blesmes," said the officer. "By tomorrow morning you will be able to cross there with your guns."

"Tomorrow morning!" cried the sergeant. "Why, the boche will be clear to Germany by then!"

The French laughed.

"Ah, no," said they; "he will not go that far. Behold!" pointing to the hills to the north of the town. "He awaits you there. No hurry; he will not run away."

"Where are you going?" one of them asked Eadie.

"I am trying to find a bridge to get back on the other side," he replied.

"There is a tiny one where the river forks," said the officer. "You can cross there. It was not destroyed. But look out. It is well shelled, that city is."

THE sergeant went on his way. The roads were deserted, and as Eadie drew nearer the city he could hear the faint clanging of shells and see the smoke of them bursting. There was much French equipment strewn along the road—knapsacks, machine-gun ammunition-carriers, bayonets, overcoats, messkits. These had been thrown away during the retreat and had remained untouched for six weeks, for this road had been swept by the American fire all that time and the Germans had stayed away from it.

Only once in a while beside some pit or in the ditch would be a German helmet, rusty and full of holes, or a shred of gray cloth, or one of those tiny canteens covered with corduroy that the enemy carried. Once, behind a house, Eadie saw three ornate crosses; and, turning that way, he inspected them.

There were flowers on the crosses and newly made mounds beneath them. On each cross was the man's name and rank, and his regiment. They had all belonged to the 377th Infantry. Upon the center cross was hung a sign, newly painted and in English—

AMERICANS, BE KIND TO THE
GRAVES OF OUR COMRADES.

Eadie meditated upon this sign.

"Now what do you suppose they thought we'd do to their comrades' graves?"

Who knows what lie their officers had told those poor Brandenburgers? Probably that the Americans dug up the enemy dead in order to get their belt-buckles and shoulder-straps.

When Eadie arrived at the outskirts of Château Thierry he found company enough. Patrols, both French and American, were combing the hillsides. Shells clanged continuously in the streets. At the fork of the Marne American engineers sweated at a bridge that the boche would probably destroy directly it was built.

The first bridge he came to had been tumbled into the river by the destruction of its central arch. The roadway had fallen down whole like a drawbridge going the wrong way, and the Americans had placed ladders against this inclined plane in order that they might mount to the bridge and so cross.

The main bridge, spanning the river on the street that went from the railroad station to the square, was a total wreck. It was at this bridge that the American machine-gunners had stayed the German drive in June.

Beyond the bridge with the ladders and up-river from the big bridge was a small, narrow arch that crossed to the other side. It was not plain what this thing was for. Perhaps it carried sewer or gas pipes or a water-main. Anyway it had not been destroyed, for it was not wide enough for two men to walk abreast, and one man with a rifle could keep the whole German army from crossing it.

Eadie teetered across this bridge, such as it was, hoping that a shell would not come his way meanwhile, and so reached the other side, where he found himself on the parapet of a trench that ran through the back yards of some small houses there. It was but a moment's walk to the south end of the main bridge, where there were many soldiers standing about, several limousines belong to officers of high rank, motorcycles, bicycles and horses. They were all there with the same object in view—to find a bridge or discover some method of getting across the river without one.

Shells whistled by, and off in the middle distance was a railroad gun, pointed toward the heavens, from which every so often would come a little puff of smoke, while the gun would give a convulsive leap. The gun had time to return from its recoil before the faint boom of the explosion would reach the hearers' ears. This gun had been run up on the railroad and was now doing its best to speed the boche on his way. The sight of the great weapon was very cheering to all beholders.

"Hey, Eadie!" called a voice.

Eadie jumped and looked about him.

"Hey!" cried the voice again. "Over here."

The sergeant looked and perceived a motorcycle and sidecar, operated by a soldier known to him, a member of the staff of Eadie's battalion.

"Who've you got with you?" asked Eadie, crossing to where the other soldier sat on his machine. "The major up looking around?"

"Naw," said the other man. "I got Captain Clifford along. He's lookin' for a bridge."

Captain Clifford was battalion adjutant.

"What you doin' up here? Hidin' out?"

"Hiding out?" cried Eadie indignantly. "Hiding out? How come, hiding out?"

"Where'd yuh get the spiffy blouse?" asked the other man, ignoring the question.

"I found it," said Eadie, grinning.

"I bet it belongs to Lieutenant Garfield. He was roarin' around yesterday that some one lifted his offn him. He'll cut your throat if he catches you with it."

"He will if he's got guts enough to come up here after me."

"He's got guts enough to follow yuh t' —— if he thinks you got anything of his. Man, his name used to be Garfinkle. I know it did. He won't need to come up here after yuh, though. They want yuh pretty bad back at the P. C. The major was telephonin' all over the outfit for you. Gee, all you could hear was 'Sergeant Eadie, where's Sergeant Eadie?' "

Eadie sat down upon a large stone or a block of cement or something of the kind. His legs refused to bear him up any longer. He drew out of his blouse pocket a sack of tobacco; and, having carefully smoothed out a paper, he rolled himself a cigaret. He was surprized to see how steady his hands were.

He licked the paper, stuck it down, twisted the end of the cigaret; and, having lighted it, he inhaled a large lungful of smoke.

When he had breathed this forth again he looked up, expecting to meet the curious gaze of the motorcyclist.

This one, however, was looking across the ruined bridge into the section of the city that lay on the farther side. Eadie followed the other's gaze. Across the Marne, on the far corner, where the street went down toward the square, was a large shop bearing a sign:

DÉBIT. ESTAMINET. VINS, BIÈRES.

"I wonder," said the motorcyclist thoughtfully, "if there's anything left in that place that ain't broken."

"You were saying they were looking for me," said Eadie regarding the smoke of his cigaret. "Did you hear what they wanted?"

"No, I didn't," said the other man, grinning slyly, "but I kinda got the idea it was for murder."

THE city of Château Thierry spread itself on both sides of the Marne. The section south of the river was purely residential; and very probably the best families lived there and looked down upon those of their fellow-citizens that lived across the river. All of them, however, had gone away.

The railroad ran along the south bank also, and there was a shop and a yard there, with a rusty locomotive therein, that either the French had abandoned as worthless or had been too busy to take away with them. A magnificent street, bordered with great trees, followed the course of the river and the houses of Château Thierry merged almost imperceptibly into those of the suburb of Chierry.

At about this point there was a beautiful white house, somewhat back from the street, from which it was separated by a wide lawn. There was a wall around this house, a low wall, to keep dogs and other undesirables off the lawn.

The city and town seemed to have been delivered up for sacking. The dead, cemetery-like appearance of the streets was gone. The doors of all the houses hung wide, and the evening breeze fluttered white curtains from open windows.

Through the windows one might see helmeted figures seated at tables and hear pianos tinkling and lilting of songs. The gentle notes of "Bang Away, My Lulu!" wafted from one house, where Americans were cheering their souls with song; and from another came the strains of "*Sous les Ponts de Panam'*," or "*Fanfan la Tulipe*," sung with just as much joy and just as great volume by the French comrades.

At intervals would come the crash of china or the rattling of a chair being cast down the front steps. On the lawn of one of the larger houses a squad of machine-gunners was giving tableaux before an appreciative audience composed of French and Americans. The actors representing men wore velvet window hangings draped about them like capes. The other members of the cast wore female undergarments over their uniforms and spoke in falsetto voices. The spectators were so weak from laughter that they could but feebly applaud.

Blam! went a shell in the next street.

"Merciful heavens!" squeaked a six-foot doughboy, arrayed in corsets and a picture hat. "My husband has come home!"

He was cheered to the echo.

Across the street from the actors was a large white house and a lawn, and a wall about the lawn, as hath been said. Upon the wall sat an American soldier, who seemed to take little notice of either the tableaux or the singing, or the bursting of the shells.

This one was Eadie. He was still in a daze. Murder. That is an ugly word. It is an evil thing to be accused of murder.

Eadie had been stupefied by what the motorcyclist had said. He was astounded that the police had discovered him so soon. The motorcyclist had grinned and thought it was a joke, and had not believed that was what they really wanted Eadie for. But Eadie knew.

He thought for a moment of going back and brazening the thing out, but he knew his conscience would betray him. He had a treacherous conscience that brought the blush to his cheek when he lied and that would make him appear as guilty and abject as any dog caught in a sheep-fold. Not for him.

What then? He looked up the river, where the hills were red under the sunset. Beyond the hills, the enemy. Certain death to go that way, or captivity. And captivity would only postpone the issue. They'd get him after the war.

A sound of cheering broke in upon the sergeant's meditation. The cheering came nearer, swelling into a roar. The singing stopped; the actors forsook their tableaux and crowded down to the street.

Jeers and hoots, cries of "Ah, there, Fritz! goin' to Paris?" "Where'd yuh get 'em?" "Who's your friend?" resounded from all sides. Eadie rose to his feet.

Down the street in the gathering dusk came a German machine-gun crew, led by a very small and very important doughboy. They had been taken, so to speak, in the act, and their gun, a light Spandau, was carried by one of their number. They looked hangdog and ashamed, and seemed to shrink away from their jeering captors.

"We must have got contact at last," thought Eadie. "Those are the first prisoners I've seen. They probably stood up and held up their hands the minute we hove in sight. No wonder they look so downcast."

These gunners had been left behind by their own troops to hold up the advance of the Americans, left to certain death if they resisted and killed any Americans, or to capture if they did not. If they came away before the Americans reached them, they would most probably be shot by their own officers.

"I don't blame 'em for giving up," thought Eadie.

With his thoughts turned into a new channel and away from his own woes for a minute, he remembered that he was there on a definite mission and that back at the battery the captain was waiting to hear from him.

"I'll phone him," thought Eadie, "and then they can't get me for neglect of duty, too. If he says to come back, I can get lost on the way."

Having made his decision, he stood up and howled in his turn, as the machine-gunners went by and disappeared into the gloom at the far end of the street.

Eadie looked about for signs of a command post or somewhere that he could get to a telephone. There was a signal-corps truck at a little distance, and the sergeant went toward it. As he had guessed, they were stringing wire, and he asked one of the men where he might be able to telephone to his battery.

"Grab one of those instruments out of the wagon," said the man, "and there's a line over on the lawn in front of that château that you can cut in on. You know how to cut in on a wire?"

"I hope to spit!" Eadie assured him; and, armed with the telephone instrument, he went back to the château, climbed over the wall and, hunting around in the tall grass for a minute or two, found the wire and proceeded to cut in on it.

The line was a busy one. The first thing Eadie heard was a very excited officer telling some one about the capture of the machine-gunners. A gruff voice said, "Huh!" now and again. The excited man rang off, and another one began to read an attack order. After that there was silence, and Eadie hastily ground the crank of his machine.

A hoarse voice answered.

"Huh!"

"Give me Home Run," said the sergeant.

"Home Run!" cried the hoarse voice. "Where the —— do you think you are? Who's this talking?"

"I'm a sergeant of artillery. I have a very important message. You make that connection or I'll have your scalp."

The man at the other end choked.

"Where are you?" he gurgled.

"None of your business," said Eadie. "You push your plugs and keep your yawp shut!"

"—— —— *you!*" cried the other man. "This is General Sleyton's private wire, and you can get shot for cuttin' in on it."

Here there was some buzzing talk that Eadie could not understand; then a new voice spoke, very clear and cold.

"Gee!" thought Eadie. "This is probably the general himself."

"What's this about?" asked the new voice.

Eadie explained very respectfully.

"Give him Home Run," said the new voice; "but don't you cut in on my wire again, young man."

Followed a long period of silence; then a far-away voice said—

"Home Run has been closed."

Thereupon Eadie took off his tin hat and cast it to earth.

"—— the luck!" he cried. "That means the outfit is hooked up ready to pull out and waiting for me to come back and show them where there's a bridge! And there isn't any bridge. Also I'll get strung up by the thumbs for not letting them know about it before. Well, back to the battery for me, police or no police."

So then the sergeant picked up his hat and disconnected the telephone. After that he went off down the street, returned the instrument and then started back to his battery like a martyr to the flames. He felt so very noble about it that he forgot his fear of being arrested.

IT WAS night when the sergeant reached the battery. He had expected to find the teams all harnessed and the carriages in the road, ready to move the moment he arrived. Instead he found every one asleep excepting the officers and the first sergeant, who were in the tiny P. C., their heads over a map. Eadie crawled among them and announced that there was no bridge practicable for artillery.

"I know it," said the captain. "We got word from the division, who had it by airplane. We aren't going to move until two A.M., and by the time we get up to the river if there's no bridge we'll have to swim.

"Oh, I forgot. There's a machine-gun company in the woods back of the kitchen that want a guide to take them over to the main road to Château Thierry. You go over and take them, will you? They got separated from their outfit, and I told the lieutenant I'd give him a guide so that he wouldn't catch ——."

"Sure, I'll show him the road," said Eadie, backing willingly out of the P. C.

"Wait a minute," cried the captain. "I'm not through yet. When you come back—" the officer paused, and a note of regret, of sorrow even, came into his voice—"when you come back, go over to the battalion. They want to see you over there."

It was dark in that P. C. save for a wavering candle, and the faces of the other men floated in darkness. Their eyes looked at Eadie sorrowfully, regretfully; but they said no word, not any of them. There was a strained feeling in the atmosphere; the very shadows cried—

"Farewell!"

Eadie knew that these men were silently bidding him good-by; he knew it as well as if they had said the words.

"Yessir," said the sergeant, and then backed out through the low door.

Eadie felt no fear now, nor any panic. The blow had fallen, and he was still untouched. He had his liberty; and the bird in the bush has always been a bad risk.

He had been ordered to guide this machine-gun platoon as far as the Château Thierry road. Why not as far as Château Thierry? That would give him more time in which to consider. There was a way out, an alibi to be thought of, and he had a whole night in which to think one up.

He found the machine-gun platoon, its members stretched out under the trees and looking very much like dead men save that they snored and swore sometimes when one of their comrades kicked in his sleep.

Eadie stopped and considered when the line of little carts assured him that he had found the men he sought. If they were all asleep it might be dangerous waking them, for they had their enemy ever in mind and sometimes leaped from their sleep and smote the man that awakened them, thinking him a boche.

"Now how do I know where the lieutenant is?" said Eadie to himself. "I'll have a fat chance going around and waking every one up."

It occurred to him that a lieutenant that had lost his platoon would be rather wakeful, so he proceeded to find out if this were so by searching among the sleeping men for one that was awake.

He took but a step when a loud voice cried—

"Halt!"

Eadie halted instantly. The man who was careful of his health became a statue upon being halted near the front. If he had one foot in the air, he kept it there.

"Who is there?" asked the same voice.

"Friend," answered Eadie.

"Advance to be recognized!"

Eadie advanced, and a man that sat at the foot of a tree peered closely into his face, felt of the texture of his uniform and then said coldly—

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm hunting for a crazy shavetail that got lost, and I'm supposed to lead him back to the road."

Needless to state, the sergeant knew very well that he was talking to the shavetail himself, but he was full of wrath at being halted and advanced and all that old stuff as if he were coming back to some training-camp after the gates had been closed.

"I'm the man you're looking for," said he against the tree, "and I'll thank you to be a little more respectful."

"Yessir," said Eadie.

"Are you ready to go now?"

"Yessir."

The man against the tree reached out with his foot and kicked a sleeper.

"Get the men up!" he ordered.

The man who had been kicked arose, and in a little while sleepy protests were wafted to the listeners' ears, and references to heaven and ——. Eadie could make out many shadowy forms getting up and adjusting tin hat and belt and then folding up their blankets. There was a muttering of sleepy curses from the direction of the mule-carts. In a short time they were ready; and, Eadie and the lieutenant taking their place at the head of the column, they moved out, the men stumbling against each other and the carts rattling over the rough roadway.

When they had reached the highway and turned off in the direction of Château Thierry Eadie still marched at the lieutenant's side. No one said anything to him; no one paid any attention to him. They trudged along without a word, hobnails shuffling down the white road under the moon. Perhaps they slept as they walked.

There are usually three stages in the fatigue of marching. An organization leaves its billets at noon perhaps and, marching all that afternoon, is within the advanced zone by dark. That means that it has reached the zone that is within range of enemy guns and aircraft observation, and it also means that the march has just begun.

The men by this time are very tired. They continue the march that evening, and it becomes acute torture to move the legs. At this time the weaker soldiers drop out, and the sergeants must waste good strength kicking them back into ranks again.

The march still continues; and by midnight, perhaps a little later, the third stage is reached, when a man no longer feels the ground beneath his feet nor the rifle upon his shoulder. His mind becomes a blank, his senses are numb. Very soon he goes to sleep, even though he still continues to march.

It must be remembered, however, that this stage is a long time coming, and may be likened to the fainting that follows a period of extreme suffering. A man can not do this very often without paying for it dearly, as he must pay for any other excess.

Eadie had no idea what organization these machine-gunners belonged to, how far they had come nor where they were going. He was going as far as the city with them, for that was away from the battalion P. C., where he was wanted.

They went on, through Nesles La-Montagne, down the winding road to the valley, and so into the city, where, in the square before the ruined bridge, a man hailed them and announced that he was come to guide them and that he had been waiting for several hours. The guide conferred with the officer and led the column into a side street, where it halted and the men fell down with one crash.

THE lieutenant moved off with the guide and then called to Eadie.

"Come with me, sergeant."

Eadie, wondering what on earth the machine-gun lieutenant wanted with him and why he didn't take one of his own non-coms, obediently followed. Eadie and the officer went into a house—not a cellar, a house—and into the *salon* thereof. The guide stayed without and sat on the door-steps.

There were long tables and mirrors, and candles stuck in bottles and on the tops of tin hats. There were a great many maps about, and a man was hanging up more. There were also a large number of officers, all smoking and all very busy. Some wrote upon typewriters; others read aloud; still others walked about, sticking pins into maps.

Eadie's lieutenant lost himself in the throng and left the sergeant standing alone by the door. He came back, however, in a little while and seized Eadie by the arm.

"I must get across the river," cried the officer. "My organization is across the river. Do you know where there is a bridge?"

"Not I," said Eadie. "But I know there isn't any. I tried to find one all this afternoon."

"But I must get across! Do you know where Brâsles is?"

"Yes, sir."

"The battalion crossed at Brâsles; there must be a bridge there!"

"There isn't any bridge there," said the sergeant patiently. "If your outfit crossed there they must have been ferried across in boats, and I'll offer a bet that they're still at it."

The lieutenant dashed away suddenly, and Eadie noticed him conferring with a man who pointed here and there on a map.

The lieutenant made notes in a small book. Then the two came back to Eadie. The other man was a lieutenant colonel, evidently a divisional machine-gun officer.

"Do you know this country?" the senior officer asked Eadie.

"A little," he replied.

"Do you know where Les Loupettes Farm is?"

"I never heard of it, sir."

"Well, you can spend some time finding it. You go with this officer until he finds his organization. If you can't find it, be at Les Loupettes by five o'clock."

"But—" began Eadie.

"Never mind," said the lieutenant colonel sharply. "Do as you are told! I never knew a guide yet that knew where anything was after he'd once got under cover. If your organization commander wants to know where you have been, refer him to me."

That ended the interview. Eadie and the lieutenant went out, aroused the sleeping men, and then Eadie took counsel with himself.

"I'm in luck," he thought. "This is my night to howl. He must have thought I was a regular guide. Why, sure, he thought I was the bird that met us at the bridge and that stayed outside when we went in.

"Well, I've got excuse enough now to stay away. The old boy said he'd take the responsibility. His shoulders are broad enough to carry it. Now we'll take this looey up to the farm, wherever it is, and then to bed. In the morning something may turn up."

"Don't stand there moping," cried the lieutenant. "Find me a bridge. I must get across. Don't you realize what this means? I'm hours late!"

"I know how we'll get you across," said Eadie. "Come on."

The column moved forward again, down the highway toward Chierry. After a few minutes' marching Eadie halted them and began to search up and down the street.

"What are we waiting for?" cried the lieutenant, wringing his hands. "My ——, what are you stopping us for? Do you know where you're going? Aren't you on the wrong road?"

"It's all right, sir," said the sergeant. "There's a side road here that leads down to the river, and there's a bridge there that I think we can get across on. It isn't a real bridge, but it will do."

"Well, please hurry and find it," cried the officer. "We haven't got all night to stand here in the street!"

Eadie was moved to tell the officer that haste makes waste in night traveling, but he held his peace. He found the street and led the column down it, where they halted abjectly by the river-bank.

"There's the bridge," cried Eadie, pointing to the little causeway or pipe-line or whatever it was that he had crossed over on that afternoon.

It arched itself over the black river, and the moon shone upon only a part of it, so that it seemed much narrower than it was.

"We can cross it," said the lieutenant, "but we'll have to leave the carts here."

He gave the order to take the guns from the carts and went off to hasten the execution of the order. Eadie addressed a man who sat upon the edge of the old trench that followed the river's edge. Since this man did no work, Eadie judged that he was a sergeant.

"What's eating that looey?" asked Eadie. "Is he crazy or what? How come he gets separated from his outfit like this?"

The other man wearily raised his head.

"Aw, he ain't got no brains," he said. "He ain't got no more savvy than a jughead. We been running around all the afternoon, up this road and down that. Yuh can't tell him a thing. He won't ask no questions; ain't no one knows anything but him. Consequence we gets lost.

"We was at a halt, and one o' the guys says the outfit ahead's movin' out, an' this here skull says it can't be because the order says the halt shall last fifteen minutes. So when the fifteen minutes is up, where are we? An' it's been that way ever since."

"What's he in such a sweat about to get back to his outfit?"

The lieutenant appeared before this question could be answered, and Eadie led the way across the bridge, the officer staying behind to be sure that all the men got over safely and that none took the wrong turn and went into one of the back yards to sleep. There was a bridge of boats over the other fork of the river; and when this had been crossed Eadie approached the lieutenant and asked if he had a map.

"Why, of course I have," said the officer.

"I'd like to look at it," said Eadie.

"We can't waste time looking at maps. We've got to hurry. Have you any idea how much time we've wasted fooling here?"

"Do you know where to go from here?" asked the sergeant.

"Why, no; don't you?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," answered Eadie. "I never was on this side of the river before this afternoon and then only for a little while."

"Well, there are only two roads from here; one goes up the north bank and one to Soissons. I noted particularly," said the officer, "when I was at headquarters. We want to take the one to Soissons. You don't need a map to find it. Any fool would know that."

"You know there are Germans on this side of the river," said Eadie, "and it wouldn't be a very hard job to walk into their lines."

"The thing is utterly foolish!" cried the lieutenant. "How could we walk into the enemy lines without knowing it? The Germans have been retiring since three o'clock this morning. Is it likely we'd catch up with them so soon? Now stop talking. It's not your place to talk and argue, but to do as you're told. Let's go."

"If I wasn't up here for my health," muttered Eadie, "I know where I'd tell you to go, and turn around and go home myself."

NOW the lieutenant was wrong. There are four roads that go out from Château-Thierry—one up the north bank of the Marne, one to Soissons, one to Fère en Tardenois, and one to Villers-Cotterets.

The sergeant did not know this, for the sector of the Marne bank that the guns of his regiment had covered, and with which he was familiar, was farther up-river. He did know, however, that in strange country a map should be consulted regularly and often.

The machine-gunners followed a road that their officer knew must be the correct one because there were many troops marching along it. What these troops were and where they were going, Eadie could not make out. He wondered how they had got across the river. Some must have ferried over in boats. Maybe a bridge had been built that had not been destroyed by the enemy. Anyway these men had crossed, or jumped over, or flown over, or got over somehow, and they were streaming up this dark road under the trees.

They could look out at the deserted fields. white under the moonlight, and see far off, other roads with black bugs on them, coming out of one grove of trees and going into another. There was no shelling, no noise but far-off guns grumbling, and there were not many men on the road. Just thin columns of infantry and scattered machine-gunners.

They marched for a long, long time. Eadie suddenly felt something rough shoved into his face, at the same time the breath was driven from his body, and several very hard things bruised him at different points.

"*Gurrf!*" he cried in stifled tones.

A hand seized his shoulder, and a voice cried—

"Gittup, guy, gittup; the lootenant wants yuh!"

Eadie pushed with his arms at what smothered him and found that he lay upon the ground. With his mind whirling he staggered to his feet.

"The loot wants to speak to yuh," said the man who had awakened him.

Eadie looked about him. The platoon was alone on the road now. There was not a sign of the infantry columns that had been with them earlier in the night. There were no trees overhead, only the cold stars, and a yellow moon, that now shone on the other side of the road.

The night was cold, and Eadie began to shake and shiver. He shook his head to drive the sleep from his eyes, tried to think clearly.

"How long have we been here?" he asked the man beside him.

"We just halted," was the reply. "Come on; the loot wants yuh, I tell yuh!"

"I must have fell asleep on my feet," said Eadie. "How long was I asleep?"

"How should I know?" said the other man. "Lookut them guys! They ain't no keepin' 'em on their feet!"

The platoon having halted, the men who slept on their feet had promptly fallen, as Eadie had done, and not a man of them stood upright.

"Sergeant," began the lieutenant, "I want you to take us to Les Trompettes or Bluettes, or whatever that farm was the lieutenant colonel said I was to go to."

"I told the lieutenant colonel that I hadn't the slightest idea of where that place was. I don't even remember the name.

I think we're on the wrong road anyway," answered Eadie.

"Well, we aren't," snapped the lieutenant; and he pointed to a sign, a little metal placard that said—

ROUTE NATIONAL
Oulchy 10 Kilometres, Soissons 35 Kilometres.

Eadie then held his peace, but in his mind was a thought about fools and angels and the latter watching over the former with especial care.

"Do you suppose you could find it on the map?" asked the officer.

"I can try," said Eadie.

Thereupon a map was shown him, which he spread out; and the officer, taking out a flashlight, shielded map and light with his coat while Eadie searched for a farm named Trompettes or Bluettes or Grisettes, or something with a similar sound.

"Give me that map," cried the officer suddenly. "Do you know there's a war on and that I'm in a hurry? You aren't doing a map problem now. You're at the front. I wish I could find a non-commissioned officer with sense. But then I suppose if he had sense he wouldn't be a non-commissioned officer."

"No," said Eadie; "you're right, he wouldn't."

"Don't talk back to me!" barked the officer. "I'll put you under arrest in a minute."

Just how this would be done the officer did not explain, but continued to inspect the map.

"Here it is!" he cried triumphantly. "I knew I'd find it. It's a very simple matter to find. Come now, get those men up and let's hurry! Don't stand there gawping at me! Get those men up!"

Eadie, raging inwardly, fell back with the men as the column moved across the wheat-field. He swore mentally that he and that officer would part company at the first opportunity.

"Did he rowl yuh?" asked a voice in Eadie's ear.

The sergeant turned in the direction of the voice.

"I'll say he did," he muttered. "He mounted up on me in style. I'd be afraid to go out at night alone if I were a guy like that."

The other man chuckled, as did several more soldiers who had overheard.

"I'm the only non-com he ain't had busted," continued the man who had first spoken, "and he come to the outfit this day a week ago. He'll get his some o' these days, you wait and see."

"Where does he think he's going?" asked Eadie. "He'll get shot up, running around these fields this way. What's coming off at this farm he's trying to find?"

"Search me," said the other man. "Maybe that's where we hop off from."

"Hop off from? Hop off where?"

There was some snickering at Eadie's astonished tones.

"Why, don't you know where we're goin'? We're goin' to pry Fritz loose from where he's at. He fell back to his second line, and we're goin' to help the doughboys jolt him out of it."

"You don't mean you're going over the top!" cried Eadie.

"Somethin' like that!" said the sergeant, and the tired men laughed again.

They were not so sleepy now. They knew when they turned off the road that their journey must be at an end, and they had taken heart thereat.

They took great joy in the astonishment of the artilleryman, who they knew was not supposed to be with them. They did not really know what he was doing there, but they knew he was very upset at the idea of going over.

"Halt that section," cried a voice. "Look alive and mind where you're going."

The section halted.

"See those bushes?" continued the voice. "Get under them, and when I call, go straight down the slope and then up the next hill. Keep going until you come to a farm. The other section will meet you there. Can you understand that?"

"Yessir," said the machine-gun sergeant.

The officer turned and hurried off, his trench coat swishing. The section fell to the ground again.

"Keep them guns off the ground!" said the sergeant sternly. "You'll need 'em bad enough in a little while."

The sergeant turned to Eadie.

"Yuh wouldn't think it," he said, "but we ain't got but about three clips to each gun. That's our efficient looey for yuh.

When we should 'a' been drawin' ammunition he was givin' us a little close-order drill. Consequence, we ain't got any clips, and he don't discover it till we was on the march, an' then he was fit to be tied, as though it was my fault."

"What will you do?" asked Eadie.

"We sent Nip Walsh—he's a corporal—over to the ammunition dump, an' he was to follow us up here. You know what chance he's got of findin' us."

"How long we got, sergeant?" asked one of the men.

"I don't know," said the sergeant. "I don't know what time we go, or where we go, or where we are now, or anything. It's three o'clock by my watch, wrist, G. I., and we ain't got a long time anyway. You birds don't go to sleep, though. We won't have no time to go round an' wake you up."

The birds made no sound after that, and whether or not they went to sleep could not be determined. Eadie was wide awake himself, wondering whether the sergeant had been fooling him about going over the top or not.

Eadie reflected that when outfits went over they didn't go by sections and that the preparations were quite elaborate, with battle orders and maps and pre-arranged signals and objectives and all the glorious panoply of war. He had never been over the top in his life, and what he knew of it he had gained from his stay in the States, where he had heard lectures on the subject by French and British officers. This outfit might be going over later, but not that morning. When they did jump off he, an artilleryman, would have business elsewhere.

Now then, about his own affairs. How could he escape the long arm of the law? A long arm reached down at him from the heavens, very long and slim. Eadie looked at it in mild wonder, especially to see if it had M. P. on it or silver chevrons on the cuff. It had a great many glittering stars on it, and Eadie decided that it must belong to Marshal Foch. Then Eadie was fast asleep, and his mind held no more visions.

THE first light of day. Heads raising in the wheat. Eadie awakened and looked about him, wondering. A faint cloud of smoke was drifting slowly away. And the machine-gunners were sitting up one by one, watching it.

"Where'd that one come from?" they asked one another.

There is no alarm clock like a high-explosive shell. The machine-gun sergeant began to call aloud.

"Git up! Git up! Git up! Roarin' raspberries!" he cried. "I didn't hear a thing. It's broad daylight, an' we must be hours late! I didn't hear no call. Ain't that a —— of a way to run a drive! Go inta them bushes an' wait till I call! I ain't heard a thing. Git up, every one; come on. Come on! Never mind your blankets; never mind nothin'; come on! Pick up them guns! Let's go!"

Eadie shook his head to clear his mind and try to bring some idea to it as to how he had come there. The men, panting and still half-asleep, shouldered their machine-guns, one man with the gun, the other with the tripod, and the rest carrying blankets over their arms, slickers, ammunition carriers and miscellaneous junk. Helterskelter, led by the sergeant, they rushed down the slope and up the next one, into another field like the one they had just left. A shell crumped in the field where they had slept.

"We just got out of there in time," yelled Eadie in the sergeant's ear.

"Don't yell so loud," said the other man. "I ain't deaf! Can you see a sign of any one?"

"Not a soul," said Eadie. "Wouldn't you think there would be other men running around here? I always thought there was quite a mob going over the top."

This Eadie had said slyly, to imply that he knew very well they weren't going over the top, or anything like it.

"You'd think there'd be more than us, wouldn't you?" said the other sergeant dubiously.

He halted and looked about him. Directly in front was a tiny road, crossing the fields from east to west. Beyond, the ground went gradually up, to quite a hill. There were woods and fields, but no living thing. Off to the east, not far, was a church spire. Where the men had halted was rather dark, for the sun was still behind the woods.

The machine-gunners looked at each other with strained, apprehensive faces, their eyes gummy with sleep and their clothing wet from the heavy dew. Eadie began to believe that they really were in an attack, these men looked so scared.

"Where we gonna go?" they called to each other.

"He said to go up the next slope an' we'd see a farm, didn't he?" suggested Eadie.

"Did he?" asked the sergeant doubtfully. "I don't see no farm up that mountain."

"Maybe it's over that way," said a gunner, pointing off to the right, near the church spire.

"Let's go see anyway," said the sergeant, "and let's get a wiggle on. We must be awful late as it is."

They departed once more, hustling along as fast as they could.

"Come on, you," cried some of the men to their slower companions. "What the—— is the matter with you? We ain't to no funeral!"

"Say," shouted one of the hindmost ones, "if you think I kin run over these here fields like a dog-gone deer an' carry this here muzzle-elevatin', back-firin', forty-mile machine-gun on my shoulder, you got another think comin'. If you ain't satisfied with the pace I'm makin' you can carry this blue blazin' length o' sewer-pipe yourself. Who the —— promoted you to be commander o' this army, anyway?"

When they had crossed the next field they could see nothing but a copse. No farm, nor any sign of one. The section halted, panting.

"I wish I knew where I was at," muttered the sergeant, wiping his sleeve across his streaming brow. "We ain't gettin' nowheres. Does any one see any soldiers around? Maybe we could ask one o' them where our outfit is."

"It's going to be hot," said Eadie, unhooking his blouse, "and the quicker we get out of these fields the better."

"Say, won't his nibs throw forty fits when we show up!" remarked the other sergeant. "I see where my stripes takes wings about the time we get into liaison with the other section. Now where?"

"Let's ketch our wind, will you, sergeant?" cried the gunners.

"Hurry up and ketch it then, and when you ketch it, hang on to it. We're r'arin' t' go this time!"

With blood-chilling suddenness a plane zoomed at them, and the panting gunners hurled themselves to earth. Eadie and the other sergeant got under a bush, where they felt more secure, and looked up at the circling newcomer. The plane was coming closer with every spiral.

"Hey, hey!" cried the men in the field.

A confused clamor came from the gunners.

"What's comin' off?" muttered the sergeant.

He and Eadie peered from their bush.

"Hey, sergint," called the men. "It's one of our planes. Look at it!"

Sure enough, the plane had red, white and blue circles on its wings. It was very close now, so that the men could see the aviator looking out. He leaned over the side, and then a red flare blazed beneath the plane.

The aviator, seeing that the men were watching him, waved his arm several times as if to say, "Come on," and then pointed toward the church spire. This spire was now behind them, to the southeast.

"He means for us to go over there!" cried everyone, and without waiting for further orders they all scattered in that direction.

More fields, more gullies, more slopes to climb and tangled grass to trip over. The day was now growing brighter, and the air was quite warm. Sweat poured from the men.

"There's the farm," cried Eadie suddenly.

In the direction he pointed was a black wall jutting from a clump of trees. There was one chimney in sight and a door that apparently opened into the yard of a farm.

The foremost men came to a halt and allowed the stragglers to come up. There was no sign of any one about the farm, and the two sergeants regarded it with doubt.

"There ought to be more men around," said the machine-gunner.

"Ought to," agreed Eadie. "Maybe that's not the place."

He unbuttoned his blouse all the way down so that he could breathe easier.

"Let's go over and see," said the other sergeant.

At this the men muttered, and one spoke up.

"Sergint," said he, "we been runnin' around these fields now fer a long time, an' I fer one am clean outta gas. We got these —— tripods and things to lug. Why don't you an' that other guy that's so wise go over an' see? If it's the place we'll come over; an' if it ain't, then no harm done, an' we can go on huntin' again fer the place we're goin' to."

The other men gave hearty approval.

"That's right," they said, and some even sat down and announced that they were played out and that they would go no farther.

"Come on," said the machine-gun sergeant to Eadie, "an' let these babies rest theirselves. You'd think guys that had the guts to draw a soldier's pay wouldn't mind doin' a little soldierin'."

So Eadie and the machine-gun sergeant went off alone across the field.

As they drew near the farm they heard a voice calling and then the slam of a door.

"There's some one there, all right," said Eadie, "and this is the way that aviator pointed."

"It looks like there was a drive on," said the sergeant, stopping and looking back across the fields, where here and there tall fingers of smoke rose suddenly and then drifted slowly away. "There ain't a great deal o' them shells, though."

"Let's hurry," said Eadie, "and get in touch with somebody. I'm sick of this running around."

The two trotted forward and entered the open door in the wall.

The courtyard of a farm. There was a pump in the center, and across from the door in the wall was the house where the people of the farm lived. Two men in their shirts washed themselves at the pump.

It was still dark in the farmyard, so that Eadie could not tell who these men were; but they certainly were not Americans, for they wore whitish-colored shirts, and moreover they had on suspenders that hung down about their hips, making white loops in the obscurity. They might be French. As for the rest of the machine-gun platoon, or any sign of Americans, there was none.

In the far corner of the yard was a cart, a high-wheeled affair that was almost as high as the wall against which it stood. Two more men, who had evidently been sleeping in the cart, stood up, and this brought them into the sun that shone over the wall. These men had dirty, sleepy, faces, and straw hung from them. They had on gray blouses and round gray caps, pulled down tight to keep their heads warm.

Germans!

EADIE stood stock still. In that one strangled second he thought of many things. He wondered vaguely what the German word for "Hands up" was, and how many Germans there were in the farm. It was probably full of them.

The machine-gun sergeant rested one hand against the side of the door and, crossing one foot before the other, looked vacantly at the men in the cart. Eadie held his breath. The men in the cart jumped down and walked into the house. The men at the pump continued to wash, splashing their heads with water and blowing like whales.

The two sergeants looked at each other, then in unison they stretched a leg in back of them and withdrew from the gate. Outside in the wheat they looked into each other's eyes. Eadie wondered if he looked as scared as the other man did. Then without a word they both began to make frantic signals to the other gunners where they sat at ease, their heads just visible.

Eadie waved his arms wildly. Would those idiots never look? He could not shout, for if he did the Germans in the farm would be alarmed. More experienced soldiers than these two sergeants would have realized at once that they were lost and would have fled to the fields; but these two, being young, and green withal, had immediately made up their minds to capture the farm, never thinking whether it was an isolated post or the very pivot of the Germans' defense system.

The gunners in the fields appeared not to notice. Eadie could see one holding a match to another's cigaret. He saw the feet of some recumbent soldier elevated luxuriously in the air, and he cursed them all heartily.

Voices came from the farm and the sound of feet crossing the stones of the yard. Some one was coming out of the door. Then one of the distant gunners caught sight of the wildly waving sergeants and stood up.

The feet came to the door in the wall, and Eadie sprang in that direction. There was a great sound of bustling and clattering from within the yard. A German came out of the gate, and his chin was at just the right angle to meet Eadie's knuckles as they finished a sweep that had begun at the sergeant's knees. *Bam!* The German curled up beside the door.

"Golly!" exclaimed Eadie. "With just one wallop! I knocked him cold!"

He had never done such a thing before, had never known he could. Drunk with the thought of such prowess, Eadie drew his pistol and rushed through the gate, crying—

"Hands up, everybody!"

The farmyard had changed. There were no longer two men who washed in the center of a vacant yard, but one man who had two huge cans in front of him. In back of this man were a great number of other men, holding what looked like dinner-pails in their hands. The garrison of the farm was about to eat breakfast.

Eadie could have no more stopped or drawn back than can a ski-jumper half-way down a slide. He had some of the sensations that such a man would have if he suddenly saw a deep pit in his path.

The impetus of the sergeant's rush carried him halfway across the yard; but before he had reached the man with the cans, the dinner-pails had clattered to the ground and every hand reached for the heavens. Some one else rushed into the yard, but Eadie dared not turn around to see who it was.

"Keep your gun on 'em, sergeant, an' I'll frisk 'em."

And Eadie took heart, for he knew the other sergeant had followed him. His chest began to swell. Had he not knocked out a man with one punch and then captured a regiment of Germans single-handed? A company anyway. Why, there must be twenty men in sight.

At this moment a head appeared at a garret window.

"Blah-blah-blah!" cried this one, or words to that effect.

Immediately the men in the yard made a wild dash for cover. Some rushed into the house, others into the carriage shed and stable, down-cellar, up-stairs, half a dozen ways at once. The man in the garret had told them that there were only two Americans.

Eadie fired into the thick of them as rapidly as he could pull the trigger. He expected to see men fall like leaves in Autumn and was very much surprized that not one bit the dust nor even showed signs of a wound.

A rifle cracked from somewhere. There was a dart of flame from behind one of the carts; smoke curled from the open grain-loft. *Crack!* went a rifle. *Wheeee!* went the bullet as it ricocheted from the stones of the yard.

Eadie discovered that his gun was empty, and as his fingers fumbled with the magazine he dropped it. Rifles were firing everywhere now, and the sound of their discharge was like corn popping.

As Eadie bent over to pick up his magazine he had a comforting thought that his tin hat was toward the cart, where most of the fire seemed to be coming from. At this moment a shell burst just around the corner of the house, and the firing from that corner ceased immediately.

Simultaneously with the arrival of the shell the machine-gunners came in by the other door. Eadie felt that the moment was propitious for a strategic retreat, which he effected by diving into the house. He found himself in the kitchen of the farm, much smoke and dust, three men standing by the windows that looked on to the yard, their hands raised in air, and two more men on the floor, both badly wounded or dead.

Pounding came from the yard, where the machine-guns had gone into action. Then it stopped, and the Americans could be heard urging invisible persons to "come down outta that," and to "step up, Fritz, or we'll let another clip go."

BLAM! The house rocked, and captors and captured rushed out into the yard. The machine-gunners were taking down their gun and making ready to depart down-cellar with it.

At the cellar entrance they met Germans coming out, and there was a moment of confusion. The Americans, however, knew where they were going and the Germans were rather undecided, so that the Americans carried the day, and the whole crowd went into the cellar in a heap.

Eadie dashed across the yard to the stable, but he found the roof was gone and decided that it would be a poor place of shelter. His prisoners had meanwhile gone their way. Shells were bursting regularly, with the steady sound of a man striking a tree with an ax. *Chock!* Pause. *Chock!*

Three Germans, one very short and fat, one medium-sized and round-shouldered and one very tall and thin, with an over-large blouse, stood by the cart, their hands raised, stolidly waiting for some one to take them prisoners. They looked like the figures in a Bairnsfather cartoon.

In at the main gate came two more of the enemy, full pack and with rifles in their hands. They caught sight of the three under the shed and then saw Eadie and the other Americans. The two newcomers came to a sliding stop, turned about on one leg, exactly the same way that a certain comedian has made himself famous by doing, and took their departure.

Eadie tried to bid them farewell with a bullet, but the slide on his automatic was still open. By the time he had pressed the release and his gun was in working order, the two visitors were gone.

In one of the upper windows of the shed appeared a man who raised his hands to Eadie as a signal that he had surrendered. A shell burst and he ducked back again. Then he reappeared and ducked once more as some one fired in his direction. A third time the man thrust out his head and shoulders, waving his arms in air, and a third time he withdrew.

Eadie, speechless with laughter, sank down upon a piece of timber. He faced the house and was on the same side of the yard as the gate by which he had first entered.

There was a pattering sound, and what appeared to be raindrops appeared on the wall of the house opposite. Once Eadie would have thought they were raindrops, but he knew better now. He listened, but could hear nothing save distant shouts and the clanging of shells.

Ah! There it was! Eadie heard a faint tapping, far out in the fields where the machine-gunners had roamed that morning. There was a machine-gun out there, firing through the gate, and the raindrops were the marks the bullets made, striking on the wall.

The yard was deserted once more. The Yanks were gone; the three Germans under the shed were gone; the man in the loft stayed out of sight.

A shell shrieked. By the time it had howled down into the yard and burst by the well, Eadie had made two jumps and was down the stairs into a vegetable cellar or something of the kind, where he found the sergeant and a gun crew, standing up and crowding each other, for there was no room to sit down.

"Yuh all right?" asked the machine-gun sergeant excitedly.

"Sure," answered Eadie. "How are you? What do you suppose happened? Isn't this a —— of a mess!"

Eadie was wild with excitement, and every time he thought of the two Germans who had rushed into the yard and then rushed out again he laughed aloud. The other men in there were sober enough and doubtless thought he was crazy.

"Do you know," said the sergeant, "I think we got caught in our own barrage. I'm beginnin' to think we got in too much of a sweat."

"This racket sounds more like a bombardment than anything I've heard yet this morning," agreed Eadie.

There was silence for some time while the men in the cellar shifted feet and meditated on the foregoing.

"Yeh," agreed one.

* * *

ANOTHER shell exploded in the yard, and the dust and smoke made the men cough.

"Hadn't we better put on our masks?" said some one.

"Aw, no; don't go startin' that stuff," cried several at once. "Ain't it —— enough in here now without puttin' them masks on? Some guys don't never get enough trouble. They're always hankerin' for more!"

"Them shells don't fall very often," remarked the sergeant. "If they was shootin' up this farm wouldn't there be more?"

"No," answered Eadie. "You see, when a battery is laying a barrage the gunner on each piece fires a shell; then he gives the wheel a couple of spins and counts ten. Then he fires another one. Then he spins the wheel some more, counts ten and fires another. Every time he spins the wheel the gun moves to the left. That's to sweep the target. After the gun has gone over as far as it will go the gunner starts it back again.

"Well, suppose that this farm is being swept. We'd get a shell in the yard about every two minutes. That's approximate, of course, but you see how it works."

"Ain't that comfortin'!" remarked a machine-gunner. "Suppose he wiggles another wheel and the shell comes on our side o' the yard?"

"We aren't deep enough to be buried," said Eadie, "and too deep to be hit by the shell."

"So you say," said the machine-gun sergeant doubtfully.

"No, but look," Eadie explained. "We're only just below the level of the ground, and we can see out into the yard. When the shell bursts, the pieces fly upward."

"Yeh, but what's to prevent one from comin' down the stairs?"

"Well that's different."

"I'll say it is," remarked all the hearers in chorus.

At this moment the other cellar, the one under the house, began to disgorge Germans.

"Huccum?" chorused the men about Eadie.

The Germans ran about in the yard, and some who knew the locality made for the cellar where Eadie was. He and the other sergeant made a display of arms.

"Outside, bums!" they cried together.

The Germans turned about and ran off in the other direction, going out through the gate into the fields. Faint yells were heard.

"I bet those are our guys yelling," said Eadie. "They ought to be in here pretty quick if we really did jump off ahead of time."

"They wouldn't run in with these shells bangin' around, would they?" asked one.

"The barrage will lift, won't it? It don't stay in one place, yuh poor tripe. It moves along."

Thus, another gunner, who was better informed than his comrade.

The men in the cellar waited patiently, with a great deal of anxiety, the arrival of another shell. When it burst outside the yard and in back of the shed they gave a loud cheer.

"Where'd them Jerries come from, sergint?" asked a gunner.

The sergeant did not know. They must have been in the cellar with the other gun crew, and the Yanks had kicked them out.

"I bet they just about stunk that place to death," said Eadie. "I don't wonder they got kicked out. I was captured by some Jerries once. They're a high-flavored bunch, believe me!"

In at the door in the wall leaped an American soldier. He stood in the yard, half-crouching, his feet spread, in conventional gunman position.

"Surrender!" he cried, and rapidly fired his pistol in all directions.

"Hey! Lay off that stuff!" cried the machine-gunners.

They had no desire to be pistoled by one of their own men, and it will be remembered that their heads were on a level with the paving of the yard. The soldier slowly straightened up, looking very foolish.

"Where are you guys?" he asked.

Eadie had set foot on the stair to go and meet the new arrival when three black objects, like overgrown baseballs, sailed over the wall and landed in the center of the yard, where they lay smoking gently. The gunman fled and Eadie dived back into the cellar with such precipitation as to drive the wind from two machine-gunners, whom he had met coming up. The grenades exploded almost simultaneously, with terrific force.

Americans appeared in the smoke, their bayoneted rifles advanced, their faces very grim. They ran out of the yard by the farther gate, leaving the exploration of the farm to the mopping-up squads who would come later.

The shelling grew more distant, although there was a loud explosion occasionally. There was considerable racket, machine-gun fire, bombs exploding and yells.

"I suppose we might as well go out," said Eadie. "Some one may come along and drop us a few bombs."

"I think we'd better stay here," said one of the gunners. "We ain't no use up there, an' we're liable to get hit."

"Now, look," said the sergeant. "I'm in wrong enough now for jumpin' you birds off without waitin' for your turn, an' I ain't gonna let any one say I sneaked down into a cellar. Maybe I ain't got no brains, but I ain't no dugout ducker. Come on now, everybody out!"

Everybody went out, but kept a wary eye on the cellar entrance, so that they might retreat in case of need. The sergeant crossed the yard to the other cellar and haled forth the men from that one. Germans appeared again from various parts of the yard, their hands aloft and their faces very solemn.

"Oh, ——!" muttered the machine-gun sergeant. "These birds back again! What'll we do with 'em, sergeant?"

"Kick 'em out into the fields," said Eadie. "Some one will take care of 'em. We don't want to be bothered!"

"How come they didn't put up a scrap, do you suppose, when you and me squandered in on 'em the way we did?"

"I guess they were expecting to have chow and didn't have their guns with 'em," answered Eadie. "When they saw we were alone they made a break for where they'd left them."

The appearance of many Germans at the gate in the wall attracted attention from the Americans in the field, and some of them ran over and looked in through the gate but, seeing the other Americans in the yard, went on again. The men who had been in the cellar under the house had been haled forth by the sergeant, and they now appeared, their hands in their pockets, looking very much discouraged.

"Where do we go from here?" they muttered. "What we gonna do now?"

"Huccum you kicked them Jerries all out of the cellar the way you did?" asked the sergeant.

"We was too crowded in there," said three or four, "an' them birds stunk worse'n we do. We ain't obliged to put ourselves out for them."

"Now you guys come the —— down outta those hay-mows," cried the sergeant suddenly. "This ain't no time to hunt souvenirs! Come down now till we find out what we're goin' to do!"

Several of the bolder Americans had begun to explore, searching for articles of German equipment, notably belts and automatics. They could be seen muttering to themselves at this command, though their words were not audible. A hail from the direction of the gate in the wall made every one look in that direction.

"Hey, Jim!" cried a soldier who had been looking out the gate. "Hey! Over this way!"

An answering cry came faintly from the other side of the wall. The sergeant ran over to look. A chorus of shouts greeted him.

"Oh, man!" he cried. "Here's the other section! Now there'll be —— to pay an' no pitch hot!"

The men in the yard all made a concerted movement toward the little gate, but the sergeant roared profanity.

"Git them guns on your shoulders!" he cried. "Look as if you were doin' somethin'! Oh, I never see such chuckleheads! Where's that other gun? Joe Finnessy, you was carryin' it. Where is it?"

One gun had been set up in the yard, but when the shelling began its crew had taken it down and carried it into the cellar with them. The other one had simply been cast aside. Its tripod was all askew on a pile of stable litter, and the gun was finally found under a cart.

The other crew meanwhile had gone into the cellar under the house for their gun; and in order to be in accord with the rest of the morning's happenings, of course they had to emerge with it just as the genial lieutenant in command of the platoon, Eadie's friend of the night before, entered the yard through the little gate.

"Oh!" cried the lieutenant. "I thought so! Skulking in the cellar! This is a fine way to run your section, I must say. Sergeant, where have you been all the morning? What do you mean by leaving your position the way you did?

"Don't answer me. You're a private from now on. You're under arrest. I suppose you had a nice sleep here ever since I left you! Don't stand there with your mouth open! Say something! Do something! Get your men together! Don't talk back to me when I'm criticizing your work. Not a word now!"

Eadie stood by, hugging himself to think that he had nothing to do with the machine-gunners or the conduct of the platoon. He had been thinking for some time of getting out of the farm and betaking himself to some quieter region. He was safe from the police here certainly; but then he would be just as safe from them, and lots safer from the enemy, if he were not quite so near the center of things. He was startled to see the lieutenant's eye light on him with an evil glitter.

"You!" barked the officer. "You with your hands in your pockets! Stand at attention! I'm going to commandeer you! You're a member of this organization from now on. I'll take the responsibility. You're in command of this section, hear me?"

"But I don't know anything about machine guns," cried Eadie.

"Never mind; you don't have to. I'll do all the thinking. All you need to do is to make these men work. If you're drawing a sergeant's pay you ought to know how to do that. Have your men pick up their guns and follow me. We've wasted too much time. Pick up that tripod—*private*."

This to the machine-gun sergeant.

"See here, lieutenant—" began Eadie.

"Shut up," snarled the officer. "You're under arrest for talking back! I won't have it! Not a word out of you. Move out your men."

The lieutenant went back into the fields without another word, and the gunners, sullenly shouldering their guns, followed him. The machine-gun sergeant did *not* carry the tripod. Regardless of what the lieutenant had said, he was still a sergeant. A lieutenant can neither make nor break non-commissioned officers.

"Ain't he a ——?" he remarked to Eadie.

"How'll you bet some one doesn't bump him off before the day's over?" asked Eadie.

"That's no bet," replied the machine-gunner. "That's a sure thing."

"Who was that man you were cracking in the chops a minute ago?" asked Eadie.

"That guy? That was the man I sent for more ammunition. The one that was to meet us later. He connected up with the other section."

"Did he bring up the stuff?"

"Huh!" grunted the sergeant. "'Did yuh get the ammunition?' says I. 'No,' says he, 'but I got a couple of swell bicycles!'"

THE lieutenant led the platoon around the outside of the farm, and the men found themselves on the edge of a very sizable town. A road ran by the front of the farm and curved to go through the center of the town. There was a church in sight and several houses. Probably more were around the bend in the road. Northward the road stretched between rows of trees.

Beside the road in the field straggled a few doughboys in combat groups. Beyond the road, to the northwest, was a very high hill, the "mountain" that the machine-gun sergeant had mentioned earlier in the morning. The crest of this hill was white with bursting shells; but as the machine-gunners advanced, the smoke grew thinner and finally disappeared. The barrage had rolled on down the farther slope.

Eadie, who, being an artilleryman, knew all about barrages and how far ahead of the infantry they should be, prophesied trouble to the machine-gunners.

"There's that barrage gone over that hill," he said, "and not a doughboy in sight. They're 'way down there. Whoever is running that outfit ought to be hung. They ought to shoot a rocket to hold up the barrage."

"Maybe they did shoot it and the artillery didn't see it."

"Maybe they did," agreed Eadie.

He knew that such a thing happened more often than it should. Meanwhile the barrage was gone, and the boche came out of their holes and were all set to receive the infantry when it arrived.

Then came the time for the machine guns to be of some use. A runner dashed back to the lieutenant and spoke to him. Then the runner fled back the way he had come.

"Halt!" cried the lieutenant.

The column halted and immediately took cover in the ditch.

"Come out of that!" roared the officer. "Who told you men to lie down? Stand up here till I give the command!"

The men crept out of the ditch.

"Now then," barked the lieutenant, "form sections!"

He then proceeded to give some parade-ground commands that Eadie did not understand, and the men formed in column, standing stiffly at attention. Another command, and they fell out and set up their guns, alining them very carefully and having them just the right distance apart. One crew started to set theirs up in the ditch, but the officer bawled them forth and they were forced to take position with the other three in the center of the road.

"What are you standing there for?" the officer yelled at Eadie. "Do something."

"I don't know what to do," said Eadie.

"Well, follow me around. You can do that at least, can't you? Is that within your mental range?"

Eadie made no reply, but moved over and took his place by the officer. The lieutenant began to figure firing-data, and after some time and a great deal of consulting his map and checking his figures he gave the orders to the guns.

"First piece, range eight hundred, deflection fifteen, site twelve. Second piece, eight hundred, twenty, twelve," and so on to each gun, each one with a little more deflection than the next.

"Target, enemy machine guns on crest of hill. Commence firing."

"You don't mean you're going to fire from a position like this, do you?" cried Eadie.

"Why, yes," said the officer in surprize. "Of course we are."

"Well, you're an officer and I'm an enlisted man, but that doesn't prevent me from telling you you're crazy. Those boche will snow you under! They'll sock shells in here until there won't be anything left of this place but a memory!"

"I'm in command here," said the officer coldly.

"Oh, ——!" thought Eadie. "And I ran away from my outfit to get into this!"

"Commence firing!" commanded the officer again.

"Here!" he cried to Eadie, handing him his field glasses. "Go out on the flank and see if you can see the bursts!"

The officer then went over to look at the guns and see that each one had its sight set properly. Eadie walked out a way, and, standing very close to the ditch in case of accident, focused the glasses on the hill. He could see nothing but grass and bushes and little trees.

After a time he saw a few infantrymen very wearily stand up and begin to climb the hill, going at a walk and moving slowly. These men went a little way up the slope and then turned and made their way down again in a very disgusted manner. Eadie hunted for signs of German gunners, but could see none.

"Can you see anything?" asked the lieutenant, crossing over to Eadie.

"Not a thing," said Eadie. "This glass is almost as good as the naked eye."

"Give me the glass!" snapped the officer, snatching it from the sergeant's hand.

He looked a while.

"Cease firing," he roared.

He muttered to himself and did some more arithmetic. Then he issued a new set of fire data. Firing commenced once more, and again the infantry stood up and wearily made their way up the hill. Again after they had gone a few yards they turned and wearily walked down again. Eadie could see them quite plainly with the glass. At this moment an officer came from the direction of the infantry.

"Who's in command of this dizzy outfit?" he shouted.

"I am," said the lieutenant, "and it's not a dizzy outfit either."

"What are you supposed to be shooting at; the moon? There's all the machine-gunners in the German Army on that hill, and they mind you about as much as they would a ladies' seminary! Get some action! You're holding up the whole advance!"

"You trot back to your infantry and leave the machine guns to me," said the lieutenant.

At this moment the other officer caught sight of the guns in the road. He called on heaven and earth and, casting his helmet in air, rent his garments.

"Get those guns out of the road!" he cried. "Do you know this is war? How long will they last like that?"

The infantry officer turned and ran across the fields, back the way he had come, waving his arms like a madman.

"He's gone back to report," thought Eadie. "Now the beans are on the ground in good style."

"Come with me!" called the lieutenant, "and we'll make a flank reconnaissance."

The two men trotted up the road about a hundred yards and then halted, while the officer looked at the hill again through his glasses.

"I bet I know," thought Eadie, "why he makes me stick around him. He's afraid to take one of his own men for fear he'd bump him off."

A plane appeared and began to circle above the infantry at the foot of the hill. The boche machine guns barked at it. Eadie could see some of the infantry in a group, waving handkerchiefs or something like that at the plane. They were signaling for artillery assistance.

Soooosh-CLANG! Eadie was in the ditch before the explosion, and he knew where that one had landed without looking. Right among the machine guns. Finally he forced himself to look. There was much smoke, of course, and a dismounted gun lying twisty-ways in the road. Other than that he was glad he could see nothing.

"Now," said Eadie, "you see what happened!"

"War," replied the officer calmly. "In war people frequently get killed."

He continued to inspect the hill with his glasses.

THE sun was well into the heavens now, and the road was hot and dusty. The excitement had made Eadie thirsty, and he regretted the fact that he never carried a canteen. Dust powdered him. A bit of turf leaped in air and performed a somersault. *Crack!* went a bullet overhead. The sergeant realized suddenly that he was under fire.

"Hey!" he cried.

The officer still looked at the hill.

"We're under fire," cried the sergeant.

"I know we are," said the lieutenant. "Those men down there are shooting at us."

He nodded his head in the direction of his own guns. Eadie, wordless in astonishment, turned his head. In the field near the machine guns was a group of men, and others were running over toward them.

The men were firing at the lieutenant, aiming their rifles carefully. They had to stand up to shoot, for the grass was too long to lie down, and this was the reason they had not hit the officer. Eadie could see the flash of their rifles quite clearly.

The officer still stood in plain sight, looking at the hill with his field glasses. Mean as a cottonmouth he might have been, and twice as nasty, but he was game. And Eadie was a non-commissioned officer and could not stand by and see him murdered. He jumped to his feet and ran out where the men could see him.

"Lay off that stuff," he cried as loud as he could. "Lay off! Cut it out! Quit that —— —— firing!"

He took off his helmet and waved it at them. The men saw him, for they stopped firing and Eadie could see them moving about in confusion. They shouted something, probably curses, and waved their hands or shook their fists, he could not tell which. Then their rifles began to crack again.

"All right," said Eadie. "I'll throw back a few!"

He started to replace his helmet and draw his pistol. He heard the officer behind him give a little chirp like a bird, and then the thud of his body falling.

Whit! Eadie's helmet was wrenched from his hand. The men in the fields howled like lunatics and leaped up and down. Then Eadie looked at his helmet. It had fallen in front of him. The bullet that had torn it from his hand had come from behind. Eadie swung around.

Coming toward him, not more than five yards away, were four Germans. They were coming rapidly and looked as if they meant business. Eadie's pistol discharged of its own volition, and one of the Germans stopped as if he had run into a stone wall.

"I hit *him* anyway!" thought Eadie.

Another stopped of his own accord and took careful aim at the sergeant with his rifle. The other two came on, their teeth skinned and their bayonets advanced. They had mean faces. Eadie could hear faint shouts from behind him, but he paid them no heed.

Chug! said his pistol. An imperfect cartridge had jammed. The man who was aiming at Eadie with the rifle jerked his head suddenly to one side as if he had something in his eye. Then Eadie turned with a saw-toothed bayonet not a foot from his chest, and departed. He fell into the ditch and, scrambling to his feet, tripped again and fell flat on the hard road. He closed his eyes and waited for the bayonet.

After hours and hours the sergeant cautiously raised his head. His hands still stung from their sharp contact with the road.

He looked around and saw one of his pursuers lying on his side, supporting himself on one hand. The other hand the German raised to Eadie in a sign of surrender. The man's face was white and drawn, and he tried to say something, but only choked. His head fell forward, but he raised it with an effort and tried to speak again. Once more he put up his hand, palm outward; then he fell forward on his face, his equipment clattering. Eadie ran over to him.

"Where are you hit?" he cried.

He had forgotten absolutely that this man had tried to kill him a scant moment ago, forgotten everything but that here was a fellow being who needed help. Beyond this man was the German Eadie had shot, lying face down; and a third man all curled up in a ball, lay in the field. The fourth had disappeared.

Then Eadie noticed the lieutenant. He was on his back, looking up at the trees with his eyes open. The sergeant left the German and ran over to the officer. There was no sign of a wound; but as Eadie kneeled down he could see a little square hole, a little greasy place, between the two blouse pockets on the right-hand side of the officer's body.

He opened the blouse and felt inside. Dry. He tore the shirt apart. On the white skin was a raised welt like a gigantic mosquito bite, and in the center a red hole, with little splashes of blood about the edges. That was all.

Eadie felt of the officer's heart. He was alive. Now how to get him out? Eadie had two bandages in his first-aid packet. That would make one apiece, one for the officer and one for the German. And supposing Eadie should himself be hit?

"That Jerry is out of luck," he decided. "I can be as good a fellow as the next man; but when it comes to giving a Hun my last bandage, I renig."

The grass rustled beside him. A leaf fluttered down from the tree overhead.

"I'm still being shot at," cried Eadie.

He looked helplessly around. The Americans at the far end of the field were still firing in his direction.

"I bet I'm between the lines," thought Eadie; and, fighting down his rising panic, he looked about for the safest way of retreat.

The German nearest the road had not moved since he had surrendered to Eadie and fallen on his face, and the sergeant decided he was dead.

"If he isn't, I've got no time to fool with him," said he; and, stooping again, he seized the lieutenant's body and swung it across his shoulders. "I can take this guy down to the guns and fix him up there," he muttered, "and if that's too hot, I can go on to the farm."

He noted out of the corner of his eye that the hilltop was wreathed in smoke once more, which would mean it was being shelled and he need have little concern about being shot at from there. He was shot at from plenty of other directions, however.

Things were warmer than they had been earlier in the morning. Bullets cracked by overhead—when they crack, they have gone and are harmless—stones and dust flew, twigs and leaves came down.

When he reached the place where the guns had been, Eadie paused for breath and laid the officer down. One gun had been knocked apart and lay in the road. Another stood deserted, and there was a large shell-hole in its immediate neighborhood. The other two guns were out in the field, barking away cheerfully. They would have enough ammunition now, with only two guns to fire.

In the ditch were four bloody men and two who seemed unhurt.

"Is that the looey?" asked one of them.

"That's what," said Eadie.

"What the —— did yuh bring him in for?"

"I couldn't let him die out there in the field," said the sergeant.

"Where's he hit?" asked another.

"I guess he's hit bad; he's got a hole through the side of him."

"Hey, sergeant," cried some one; and Eadie, looking up, beheld the machine-gun sergeant and two infantrymen, who had just come in from the field. "Was you the guy the Jerries jumped up the road there?" asked one of the infantrymen.

"I'll say I was," answered Eadie.

"Gee," said the infantryman, "we didn't see you guys till you waved your hat at us. You was under the trees. We was crackin' at them Jerries for quite a while."

"Yeh," broke in the other man. "We seen 'em sneakin' along there, and we couldn't make out what they was after. One of 'em would stop and let drive with his gun every once in a while. I guess they was so busy tryin' to cop you two that they never seen us."

"You'd have been a gone goose if I hadn't shot a clip at 'em, though," broke in the machine-gun sergeant. "We just got the gun set up, and one of the doughboys hollered—

" 'He's hit.'

" 'Course I thought it was you. I never thought there'd be such luck as havin' *him* bumped off. So I let go at them Jerries, and if I hit the looey that would be his hard luck. Man, if I'd known that was you I'd never dared fire an' they'd have skewered you in style. How bad's he hit?"

"He's hit bad," said Eadie. "I think I ought to go all the way in with him."

"He's an awful load," remarked one of the wounded men.

They all looked in silence at the lieutenant. Eadie wondered if the officer could hear what they were saying. Hardly. He had either fainted or was so weak from the shock of his wound that he did not know what was going on about him. His eyes had no sign of consciousness.

"We dursn't lend you a hand," said one of the infantrymen. "We'd get hung. We dursn't monkey with wounded."

"That's right," said the machine-gun sergeant eagerly. "They'll give you the works for falling out with a wounded man. They'll run you to —— and out the back door again."

The others nodded confirmation.

"Yep, that's right," they said.

"Leave him be there in the road," said one of the bloody men; "he ain't no better'n any one else. Let him wait fer th' ambulance with the rest of us."

"No," said Eadie; "I've got to take him in."

"Aw, let him take the looey in," said the bloody man disgustedly. "He wants to get himself a Croy dee Gerr. Don't waste no more breath arguin' with him."

"Listen!" cried Eadie. "I wouldn't carry this scurvy lieutenant from here across the road to get the Medal of Honor. If I was the wounded man I know quite well that he'd leave me rot in the fields before he'd even tell the stretcher-bearers where to find me. But just to show him I'm a man, and not what he is, I'm going to take him in and carry him clear to the railhead if I have to."

He shouldered the officer's body.

"They won't do anything to me for taking him in. I've got no business up here anyway. I'm an artilleryman. I don't have to hang around up here to be shot at."

Then he went down the road without another word. The officer still lived, for Eadie held on to one of his wrists, and he could feel the pulse beat.

WHEN he reached the farm, Eadie rested. He half-expected to find an aid station there, but there was none. The farm was deserted.

Eadie sighed deeply and, having made sure that the officer had not died on him, heaved up his body and went on around the bend in the road so that he could see the entire length of the town's principal street. The day was well advanced, and the air was hot and lifeless. But leaves fluttered about in the streets of the town; dust hung in clouds; bricks and broken tiles fell into the street; house-fronts bowed outward and then collapsed with a rumbling crash; thick yellow smoke gushed from windows. The enemy was steam-rolling the town.

The Germans had been driven out of the town by the first advance of the Americans. This had not meant very much, for the town had been lightly held. So far so good. The enemy was retiring anyway and had no desire to become involved in a prolonged rear-guard action.

The American High Command, of course, realized this, and the objective of the attacking troops had been the ridge north of the town. That is, after the town had been cleared, the Americans were to dig in and make themselves safe against a counter-attack, and there await further orders.

In accordance with their usual custom the Americans got out of hand, overran their objectives, pursued the retreating troops, engaged in numerous hand-to-hand fights and upset the soup generally. The fugitives from the town arrived at the main German force, which was retreating to the northeast, and threatened to turn an orderly withdrawal into a rout.

The Germans were compelled to relieve the pressure, which they did by artillery fire. Having only a very limited number of guns in position, the enemy restricted the bulk of his fire to the town in order to prevent the evacuation of wounded and the arrival of reenforcements and ammunition to the attackers, and to disrupt communication generally.

A limited number of guns. Two batteries at the most. These two batteries could drop a shell into that town for very nearly each second in a minute. This, of course, is not a very great volume of fire, compared with the bombardment preceding a general offensive, when from fifty to a hundred or so shells arrive every time the clock ticks; but still, it is large enough to make a man pause before he runs through it.

Eadie put down his burden again and considered, wiping the sweat from his eyes.

"I run a good chance of being hit," he said, "if I go surging in there. I don't know where the first-aid post is anyway. If I stay out here, this bird is liable to die on me. I might as well have stayed at the guns out in the ditch. Well, I've done my best anyway. I'm not going to risk my life for the son of a gun."

At that moment the sergeant's eyes caught sight of a wooden sign some distance down the street. It was not so far away but what he could see a red cross on it, and he thought with a sinking heart that that was a first-aid station and that it was a long, weary way down that shell-swept street.

There being no other way out, the sergeant bent over the officer again. This last had recovered consciousness, for his eyes looked at Eadie.

"Where am I?" he asked weakly.

"You're all right," said Eadie heartily. "We'll be at the first-aid station in a minute. I'm taking you in."

"Am I hit?"

The officer rolled his head about and tried to see where he was.

"Am I hit badly?" he asked.

"No," said Eadie. "You'll live to be hung yet."

He seized the officer's wrists and swung him over his shoulder again.

"Did you get the names of the men that shot me?" the officer whispered in his ear.

"They didn't shoot you," said Eadie. "The boche shot you. If you had any sense you wouldn't have run out on the flank like that, right during an advance. You might have known there'd be boche around.

"I hope you don't mind my speaking plainly," said Eadie, "because if it hadn't been for me you'd be out there in the fields yet, with a nice cloud of flies buzzing around to keep you company."

The officer made no reply. A shell whooped at them, and after that Eadie thought it expedient to crawl. This he did, dragging the officer behind him. It was a heartbreaking task, and what with the heat and the dust and the stench of high-explosive powder Eadie was nearly suffocated.

His muscles seemed on the point of giving out several times, and at last he began to weep and swear to himself. He cursed the road, the stones, the Germans, the officer, himself, the first-aid station, the heat and the smoke. Withal he made progress. The officer said no word; he had probably fainted again.

In the pauses between the shells Eadie could hear much machine-gun fire, but whether it was his own or the enemy's he could not tell. White faces looked out at him from the lower stories of the houses; but none made any offer to help, and not a soul appeared in the street. Once Eadie thought all was over, for a shell struck a roof just above him and bricks and tile came down in a shower, some striking within a hand's breadth of him.

The last few yards Eadie could not make. His back was raw where he had shoved himself along the ground. He decided to take a chance. He stood up; and, picking up the officer in his arms, he walked the rest of the distance.

The aid station was in a cellar, and the door of the cellar was shut. There was a window, evidently the window of a shop that had once occupied the cellar, at the side of the door, and through this window Eadie could see rows of stretchers with blanketed men on them.

"Hey!" he called. "Open the door. I've got a wounded man out here."

Scared faces looked at him from the window; then their owners hurriedly ducked out of sight.

"Hey!" yelled Eadie again. "Open the door. I want some first aid!"

A chorus of voices welled up from the cellar, but Eadie could not make out what they said. He descended the steps and kicked at the door.

"Open this door!" he howled. "What's the matter with you? Open this door; I've got a man here that's hurt."

The chorus from within swelled again, and this time Eadie could hear what the men said.

"Git the —— away from the door; you'll draw fire! Git the —— away from there."

"Open up in there!" yelled the sergeant, almost speechless with rage.

Shrieks answered him:

"Git the —— outta here; you'll draw fire. Git away! Gwan! You'll draw fire! Git the —— away from there, you —— —— fool! Git away from that door."

Eadie put down the officer and mounted the steps to the street. Heedless of the slamming shells, he hunted until he found a piece of cement about the size of his fist and a good big roof tile. He returned with these and hurled the tile against the door. It crashed loudly.

"Open up," he roared. "Open up, or I'll heave a grenade through the window!"

He took his stand by the window, the piece of blackened cement in his upraised hand, and in full view of those in the cellar. Several peeked at him; then the door opened suddenly and the officer was drawn in.

An officer appeared at the window.

"Go on," he shouted, waving his hand. "Get away from here! You'll draw shells!"

"Fry your face!" howled Eadie.

Then, seeing that the lieutenant was within, he looked about him for a place of refuge.

In a town of any size there ought to be numerous places where a man can get under cover and be protected from buzzing shell fragments. Undoubtedly there were many in this town, but in the hurry of the moment Eadie could not see one.

When he had crawled down the street, his mind had been more on getting to the first-aid station than anything else, but now he had the leisure to note that the town was rapidly being knocked into a heap of bricks. Forty-eight shells per minute raise considerable dust, even allowing for a large proportion of them being only duds.

Suddenly Eadie espied a cave, a retreat, a cement haven. Several houses up the street was the ruin of what had once been a pretentious house. Part of the front wall remained, together with the entrance to the front door. This last was at the top of a flight of stone stairs.

There was an arch under these stairs, not very high, but high enough for a man to crouch under. One side of the arch was closed up, but the other one was open. The space looked very much like those under American door-steps where householders keep ash barrels.

Eadie flattened out for a shell-burst and then leaped up and ran for the hole under the steps. A good thing about a regular bombardment is that there is always a certain interval between shells. That is, nearly always.

However, Eadie reached the stairs in safety and dived under them. There were two men there already, and they looked at Eadie with looks of welcome such as would be given a man who entered a church pew which was already occupied by the Christians who paid the rent thereon. They couldn't in common decency tell him to get out, but they could think a lot, and do a lot of looking.

"Kind of warm, isn't it?" asked Eadie to break the ice.

"There ain't much room in here," said one of the two men.

"It's better than being out in the street," said Eadie cheerfully.

He thought sadly that his pistol, which had jammed when the German had been about to skewer him, was still out in the fields, so that if these men wanted to cast him out he could not prevent it. That pistol, by the way, was the third one Eadie had lost in the last few days, and he wondered if he should find it again on the page white and fair, when it should come time to be paid.

This thought led back naturally to the remembrance that he was a fugitive from justice, that his next pay would most likely be drawn in some stockade, unless he should think of a water-tight alibi. The day was drawing on, and he was absent from post and duty during an offensive. He might "get away with murder," but he would have a tough time explaining how he had spent his time since the night before.

"Ah, well," he concluded, "so far I'm safe, and I am still free, so I won't think about it any more. One of these G. I. cans that keep falling around may solve the whole problem for me."

The other two men were perfectly silent. They looked out the one side of the hole that was open and blinked at the dust.

The heat in that hole was smothering. There was probably a good deal of gas coming over, but these men would rather risk it than put on a mask. The day was too hot and their beards too long. The gas mask would not only fit tightly, but would drive them mad by making their cheeks prickle. Of course if a gas shell should burst right outside the hole, that would be another matter.

They were very cramped in that hole, there being just room for the three of them. They could not sit, for it was not wide enough to allow them to extend their legs. They could not stand, for when they hunkered on all fours, their backs came against the roof. Neither could they lie down, for when they did, either their heads and shoulders or a goodly portion of their lower limbs would extend into the street, where much steel flew about.

The largest of the three glowered at Eadie. Two men could shelter in that hole without a great deal of discomfort, but three certainly was a crowd.

EADIE noticed that the shelling had suddenly stopped. His ears began to ring, and either he was deaf or else there was not the slightest suspicion of sound. The other two men looked at him meaningly as if to say—

"Well, guy, don't stay on our account."

While Eadie was debating with himself whether to look for a better hole or to stay where he was out of spite, a platoon of infantry entered the town from the far end. They were reenforcements for the troops farther north, for they stepped briskly along, bayoneted rifles slung, some carrying their slickers and overcoats, the corporals with the squad cleaning-rod down the barrels of their rifles and a very earnest young officer ahead, tapping along with a cane.

"Oh, God!" whispered Eadie. "So that's why the shelling stopped!"

An old trick of the enemy's. Fritz would suddenly hold up fire and allow troops to occupy a shell-swept zone. Then when he had them just where he wanted them, socko!

Fritz "sockoed" while Eadie still held his breath, and the infantry spread all up and down the street. Some dived into cellars, some into houses, some ran back the way they had come, others ran forward, and seven or eight of them crawled under the branches of a tree that had been cut down by a shell and that had fallen across the roadway. The infantry ran about for some time, ducking and dodging.

The town was shy of holes, and what few it had were very full. One of the last to take shelter was the officer. He had tried to rally his men—for what purpose he wanted to gather them in that shell-swept street was not clear—but, finding that he cried in vain, he wrapped his arms about his head and ran hither and yon looking for a place to go.

He ran aimlessly up and down the street, and in the interval between the howling of the shells, voices could be heard yelling:

"Git in under cover! Get in off the street, yuh —— —— fool! Come in outta that! Heeeey! Get outta sight! You'll draw fire!"

Cheering cries, these, to one who hunts a hole while Fritz snipes at him with a 77.

The officer suddenly caught sight of the place under the steps where Eadie and the other two crouched on hands and knees. He made for it eagerly. The tallest of the three under the steps came suddenly to life.

"Get the —— out of here!" he shouted. "Get the —— away! There's no room in here. We got too many here now. Gwan, get the —— out!"

"I'm an officer," cried the poor man in the street.

"I don't care a —— if you're a general, yuh can't come in here. Git the —— outta here! Find your own hole!"

Eadie made no remark. First come, first served, and let every man kill his own snakes. A whole skin beats a hero's death six ways. Besides, Eadie was unarmed, and he knew very well that the other two men wanted to cast him out, and would do so for the slightest reason.

After the arrival of the infantry the shelling seemed to redouble in vigor. Eadie wondered if there would be any getting out of there at all.

His stomach very roughly reminded him that it had been without food since he had left the echelon. In the excitement of the battle and his discovery that the police had already located him, he had not had time to think of such a commonplace thing as eating. He had plenty of time to think of it now and also of drinking.

His hands, which he had blistered terribly in helping to build the bridge of boats and which he slapped the road with in the morning when the Germans had jumped him, also had something to say of their condition. They began to throb most unpleasantly.

Moreover, there was the question of sleep. The sergeant did not feel tired, nor did he feel sleepy, but a certain washed-away feeling in the back of his knees and strange difficulty in thinking about one subject for any length of time told him that his system had noted the lack of rest. Eadie inspected a broken blister, beneath the skin of which some dirt had caked, and wondered if he wouldn't have been better off to have surrendered himself to the police long ago.

In an American division there were about twenty-seven thousand men, and there were three divisions operating in this sector. In addition there were some French troops.

When this tremendous number of men move forward on a five-mile front with all their wagons, their guns of all calibers, their motor-cars, their tanks, their ambulances, hospitals, aviation parks and all their other engines of war, it takes a great deal of planning and considerable knowledge of methods to get this unwieldy mass under way and keep it going.

Every executive in the entire army from the commander in chief down to the dub lance-jack had been impressed with the fact that at the zero hour on the H day, when the second ticked, whatever he was responsible for must move. If the waters covered the earth, if the roads were entirely removed, if there was not a horse on its feet, nevertheless the army must move forward. And as for him that let a wheel stand still after the second when it should roll, let him say his prayers.

The wheels rolled. This was not the offensive of July 18th, but that of a few days later. A division can not withstand a

German drive and then begin an offensive the next day, so the division to which Eadie belonged had been given a little time to take breath. Then forward.

Man for man and gun for gun, the Germans outnumbered the allies on this front; and while Fritz wanted to go and was eager to go before the French and Americans got too far behind him at Soissons, still he would not be hurried. No man should hurry the Imperial German Army.

So the infantry beyond the town in which Eadie hid under the steps did not make progress. They had jumped off according to schedule, but by afternoon they should have been over the hills and far away. The sun was giving signs of calling it a day and going to bed, and the machine guns on the heights above the town still clattered and the two batteries still sowed shells.

As for the other troops of the division, they moved forward as per schedule. Divisional headquarters was to arrive in the town at four o'clock. The brigade of field artillery was to be in position in a forest that was at that moment unfortunately still in German hands. This and that unit was to arrive somewhere else at a certain time and proceed to function by four-thirty.

It was now five minutes of four, and these various units, motorcycle centers, field and heavy artillery, ambulance units, machine-gun battalions, trench-mortar batteries, pigeon, wireless and photographic units, began to arrive. Some of them had brains enough to stop. Those that hadn't, went into the town, shells or no shells.

Now on the German side the two batteries that had done such a good day's work had their orders long since to pull out before sundown, for these Americans were slippery birds after nightfall. Whatever plane or balloon or man in a tree was observing fire for those Germans, reported that the pickings were getting good; but the *Oberkommando*, being consulted by telephone, said that the two batteries should come away nevertheless.

Thereupon some of the bolder spirits among the German artillerymen requested permission to do a certain brilliant thing and permission was very graciously granted.

In the town meanwhile confusion reigned. Some heavy guns were raking the road up from Château-Thierry, and airplanes which had followed the troops all the afternoon like buzzards, were taking their toll with machine gun and bomb. In that hilly country, with its dense forests, twilight comes early, even in Summer, and in the hollows it was already beginning to grow dark.

No shells had arrived for some time, and the men began to come out of their holes. Walking wounded and prisoners, runners, stretcher-bearers and details sent back for ammunition or food suddenly seemed to leap from the ground.

One moment Eadie crawled slowly and painfully from beneath the steps and looked at a deserted street. The next, when he looked up after having decided that the knee of his breeches was gone beyond recall, the street swarmed with men. On the heights beyond the town the machine guns rattled endlessly.

"How they makin' out up there?" Eadie called to a passing infantryman.

"Rotten," replied the man without even looking around.

Eadie, with a vague idea of going back to the farm and going to sleep in the hayloft, began to wander down the street. There was a hideous tangle there now of rolling kitchens, water-carts, fourgons and the horses of a troop of French cavalry. They were not Eadie's friends of the Tenth Chasseurs; they wore black-and-white facings and were dragoons.

Eadie stopped at the first-aid station where he had carried the lieutenant. An ambulance had just arrived, and some of the wounded were being carried out. He considered bawling out the stretcher-bearers for not admitting him when he had brought in the officer, but decided it would lead to nothing but a brawl and possible publicity for himself, which might be inconvenient later.

Another ambulance rumbled up to take the place of the one that had just been filled, and a man swung from the rear step. Eadie paid no attention to him, for the sergeant was examining four wounded Germans that lay very silently in the row of stretchers at the head of the cellar steps. Orderlies began to load the Germans into the newly arrived ambulance.

Eadie looked at them, and his eye fell on the man that had dismounted from the rear step. The man was an M. P., and he was looking right straight at Eadie.

"I OUGHTA know *you*," cried the M. P. "I been huntin' for you for the last coupla days!"

Eadie felt no thrill of apprehension, no impulse to flee. He realized suddenly that he was very tired, that his hands pained him, that he was hungry and thirsty and that his nerves were all worn threadbare.

This dodging shells and machine guns and running about the hot fields all day and having a fight with three Huns and escaping death on a bayonet by a scant foot, to say nothing of lugging a hundred and fifty pounds of wounded officer a mile or so, all tend to weary a man. And when it has all come to naught in the end, the man is not to be blamed for feeling his knees sink under him.

The M. P. advanced.

"Yep," he said, peering into Eadie's face. "I knowed it was you for all your dirty face and your beard. I knowed yuh by what's left o' that snappy blouse yuh got on."

Eadie looked the M. P. squarely in the face. The man had lowering brows, and one cheek was bulged by something the man had in his mouth. There was a tiny dark-brown stain at the corners of the lips. The man's collar was unhooked at the throat, and the edges of it were greasy and black.

Eadie looked again and yet again. The ground swam; trees, houses, men, whirled madly around in a wild dance. There was a sound of rushing waters in the sergeant's ears. The face before him was the face of the M. P. that had arrested him and had been beaten to death by the belts of the *Chasseurs à Cheval* two days before.

Gradually things steadied a bit. Eadie realized that the other was speaking to him, urging him to do something, insisting upon something. With a tremendous effort of will Eadie forced himself to listen to what the M. P. was saying.

"Mitt me," said the M. P. "Mitt me," he said again and extended his hand.

Eadie mitted him.

"Ain't no hard feelin's about the other day, are they?" asked the M. P. "I know I gotcha wrong now; but yuh can't be too sure, you know. But I want to thank yuh for lettin' the gang know I was in a scrap. If it wasn't fer you I mighta had t'exert myself. The frogs is mean scrappers. They kick an' wallop yuh with their belts. Say, boy, yuh should have seen that scrap. It was a roary-o-bollo, I ain't kiddin' yuh!"

"Then you weren't killed?" whispered Eadie huskily.

"Killed? ——, no! Did you hear that rumor, too? There was a rumor all over town that night that the frogs had killed a M. P. We chased it down, an' found some mail-carrier from headquarters started it. Some one asked him did he hear of it, and he asked a couple more did they hear of it, and then a dizzy traffic guy said a guy told him about it, and first thing we was all turned out to see who's missin', and the old man chased all over town all night. It was pay night, too. Then the story about the scrap got out, an' we had a rough time of it. An' all the time I was sick, too, from that fierce wine.

"Well, they got my Jerries all loaded up. I gotta go. Say, but you should have seen that scrap, though! I knocked one o' them frogs so hard I bet he won't come to till after the war. Well, so long."

The M. P. mounted the ambulance once more.

"Say," he called above the throb of the motor, "any time any o' the gang picks yuh up, jus' ask fer me."

He called his name, but the ambulance was gone down the street, and in his confused state Eadie could not hear it.

So the M. P. had not been killed. What fine fellows the military police were! Rough, sturdy men, doing a disagreeable duty, but good fellows just the same. Wasn't that one that had ridden away on the ambulance a good lad!

"I'm free!" thought Eadie. "He wasn't killed after all. What the —— did I run up here for? I'll get —— for this now, I know I will. But what did the major want me for? How come all the men in the P. C. were so glum when the Old Man told me the major wanted me? I must be in wrong for something."

The sergeant hastily reviewed his past, but could think of nothing. While he still pondered, a shell shrieked into the midst of the crowded street.

In the smoke and confusion and horror that followed, Eadie ran about from house to house. He had no purpose in doing so, except that he must keep moving or he feared he would lose his mind. He wanted to sing, to shout for joy. The shells fell regularly in the same spot, intermixed with a burst of shrapnel every so often, that cracked over the heads of the troops in the gardens behind the town.

At each burst Eadie gave a loud shout.

"Hurray! Send her down, Davie; no drill today!"

Men began to look at him askance.

He remembered, now that the more serious charge against him had vanished, that he had been absent from his battery for very nearly twenty-four hours. In the half-numbed state in which his mind was, he could think of no excuse.

"The only thing for me to do," he decided, "is to get wounded or decorated, and then they might not say anything."

It will be seen from this decision that the sergeant was somewhat light-headed.

Two planes circled about the town in great spirals, trying to locate the battery that was doing the firing. These planes had reported the withdrawal of the German artillery, and they were at a loss to know who was doing this shelling. But for the interspersion of shrapnel with high explosive, the shells might be those from an American battery, falling short.

Below the town, on the roads, in the fields and in the gardens behind the houses was every conceivable type of rolling transport, fourgons, slat-wagons, water-carts, ration-carts, rolling kitchens, escort-wagons, caissons, guns and limbers. The shrapnel burst too high, so that little execution was done, but if the bursts should come a little lower—only two or three notches on a fuse would do it—all those horses, drivers, gunners and miscellaneous, would be piled in one red burial.

The high explosive in the town had done its worst with the first two or three bursts. The shells were striking in a narrow area, and this was rapidly emptied. The indications pointed to one thing, and the word went rapidly from pallid lip to pallid lip that it was one gun only that fired.

Eadie, running from door to door without the slightest idea of where he was going, had reached the far end of the town. From here one could see nothing but the dense forest to the east and the ground rising up to the heights beyond the town.

A roar went up from the men assembled there. One of the planes had fired a light as a signal that the gun had been located. It was astonishingly near.

"Let's go capture it!" cried some one in the road.

"Come on," roared the men. "Let's go!"

And without waiting for further command the whole mob, officers and enlisted men, drivers, runners, messengers, orderlies, French cavalrymen, soldiers of every grade and branch, poured out of the town and up the hill.

Certain officers of rank tried to stop the rush.

"Here, men," they cried, "you can't do a thing like this! Hold up, every one! Hold up, I say; —— you, hold up!"

Tell that to the rising sea. These men had been shelled too long. They had lost too many of their comrades. If there was one gun in those woods, they intended to tear up that gun, and its crew with it. In the farther fields, to the west, the advancing infantry saw the exodus with astonishment and horror. The German machine gunners, unable to resist the temptation to swing their guns to a new target, opened up on the charging men.

The infantry that had lain in those burning fields all day and that had advanced by inches and that had squirmed and wriggled nearer and nearer those pounding guns, suddenly found that they were no longer under fire. They arose with hoarse cries, croaked from bone-dry throats, and, rushing on a little way, executed several movements of the bayonet manual, notably lunge, thrust and butt-strike. That ended machine-gun resistance in that sector.

The mob at the other end of the town, however, had been split up and divided into segments and groups by the machine guns and no longer streamed up the hill, but took cover in the edges of the forest and depressions in the ground. Some of the cooler heads wished themselves back in the town and regretted their haste in leaving it. Others began to wonder who had raised the first cry to take the gun. Some of them remembered that it was a sergeant who wore the wreck of what had once been a very fine blouse.

Eadie was among the leaders of the rush up the hill. He shouted and cursed. He was unarmed, and his clothes were ragged and torn. This was the second uniform he had gone through since the German drive had started, six days before. His eyes were red and blood-shot, and a stubbly beard had gathered much dirt; but his soul sang within him.

Was he not free? Was not the ghost that had haunted him day and night laid forever? Was not the M. P. alive and well?

"Yeay!" yelled Eadie. "Let's go! *À la fourchette!* Zowie!"

A lieutenant had seized his arm and appealed to those near by.

"Hey!" cried the officer. "Some one look after this man! He's crazy!"

But no one paid the officer any heed. They had too much on their minds, and Eadie had broken away and gone on, up the hill. He was not crazy, only very, very happy.

"I couldn't feel any better if I had a skinful of champagne," he told himself.

When the machine guns opened on them Eadie had ducked into the woods. He felt no fear; he was invulnerable; but he might as well go with the crowd. He found himself with a little group of men—the officer who had tried to have him restrained, another very dirty, ragged officer of infantry and an auto-rifle squad. These last had been part of a force that had been clearing these woods all the afternoon.

"Where's the fire?" inquired the ragged officer.

"We're going to capture that gun," panted the other officer. "There's a gun on the hill that's wrecking the town, and we're going to rush it!"

"That's a noble motive," said the ragged man. "Don't you think the enemy might not like it? They might take your actions amiss."

"You don't need to come," said Eadie. "No one asked your help."

He was suddenly aware of a great number of faces, looking at him soberly. He remembered the same sensation once before, when he had taken something into his mouth that had stolen away his brain. He had arisen on a table and declared that he was a better man than any one there. This in the dining-room of a very select hotel in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

As on the former occasion, his hearers looked at each other understandingly.

"Come on," said Eadie. "Forward, brave heart of Bruce, Douglas will follow thee or die!"

The knot of men moved soberly on, paying no heed to the rattling of the guns, nor the shouting where the bayonet was doing its stuff. A machine gun barked at them; but the auto-rifle squad ducked out on the flank, and the gun fired no more. Eadie, wild with impatience, exposed himself recklessly, but the others were too busy keeping their heads down to pay any attention to him.

IT WILL be remembered that when the German artillery withdrew, certain of the personnel requested permission to do a bold thing. This thing was to stay behind with one gun and a motor truck and when the Americans came too close for comfort, to hitch the gun to the truck and steal away. Meanwhile this gun would shell the town and its approaches and do very great execution.

The Germans that conceived this idea were a young subaltern and two non-commissioned officers—*freiwilligen* or volunteers. The officer's striker, or dog-robber, and the striker of one of the non-coms, also agreed to stay. Four men would work the gun, and the fifth would stay at the wheel of the truck.

Now how so much is known of the dispositions of these German batteries and of this one gun, is because one of the non-commissioned officer's servants was later taken prisoner. The gun was perfectly safe from flank attack until the machine guns that guarded it tried to spread their fire over too great an area, and so were silenced. Those that weren't captured, withdrew without waiting for orders to do so.

Eadie and the men he was with peeked cautiously through the underbrush. There was the gun and the truck behind it. Smoke still curled from the muzzle. The truck had run in off the road a way and then swung around, so that the gun was turned in the right direction.

The gunners had caught sight of some men across the field, some infantry perhaps, and they had just fired a shrapnel shell at them. Shrapnel at close range is deadly stuff. The gun muzzle had then swung back. Eadie could see it move, and another shell sailed toward the town.

"Now listen," said the ragged man in Eadie's ear. "You stay here and keep them covered from this side. We're going around to take them from behind with the shosho. You and this lieutenant are going to watch from this side. Let me borrow that rifle, will you?"

"Nix," said Eadie. "I'll stay here all night, but I've got to keep this rifle. You can get one where I got this. There's lots more dead doughboys in these woods."

Eadie had acquired himself a rifle and was loath to part with it. He and the officer that had wanted him taken care of, crouched in the underbrush and looked at the gun in the field.

"Let's crawl nearer," suggested Eadie.

"No, let's not," said the officer.

Thereupon Eadie began to move nearer the gun.

"Here!" cried the officer. "Don't move any nearer. They'll see you! Wait here! They told us to wait here!"

"I know," said Eadie. "They told you to keep me here so that I wouldn't yell and give the party away. They think I'm crazy, but I'm not. I'm just kind of drunk—drunk with good luck!"

The officer seemed unconvinced by this declaration; but he did not care to stay where he was alone, and he could not restrain Eadie by force, for Eadie had the rifle and the officer had but a pistol. So they crawled along until they were within fifty yards of the German gun.

The gunners seemed to be making preparations to leave, for they began to throw things into the back of the truck. The truck motor began to roar.

"They'll get away," cried Eadie.

"No, they won't," said the officer. "The shosho gun will be in back of them by now."

The gun fired again.

"I'm going to take that gun," cried Eadie; and, leaping up, he ran along the edge of the woods until he was opposite to the gun.

The officer followed him, cursing horribly.

"I'm going to shoot that man," he panted. "He's a menace!"

He came up to where Eadie lay on his stomach, catching his breath. They were quite near the gun now, and they could see one of the men holding a bar or a chain or something with which to hitch the gun to the truck.

Another man shoved a shell into the breech and swung shut the door. Then he stepped over to the man with the chain, as if to help him. Eadie leaped to his feet.

"Hey!" he yelled, running out of the woods into the field. "Hey! Put up your mitts!"

"Oh, my God!" said the officer, and covered his head with his hands.

The men by the gun leaped and looked around. Just exactly the way people in an automobile do when some one bumps into them from the rear. One of them stood up and stretched his hand toward Eadie. There was a sharp snap and a little spit of flame.

"He can't hit me," thought Eadie. "He couldn't hit a barn."

Then he put his rifle to his shoulder. How far was it over there? Fifty yards, for a guess. Battle sight.

Now then, at two hundred yards you held six inches in the bank. At fifty yards, hold about an inch. Thus Eadie communed with himself.

Two Germans fired at him now. Squeeze the trigger; don't pull it. Close the whole hand, slowly, slowly.

The rifle barked gloriously. The German by the breech of the gun did a flop.

"By ——!" shrieked Eadie. "I hit him!"

He worked the bolt with all possible speed. Just then the shosho began to speak, and the gun crew became good Indians. All, that is, except one of the servants, who had been elected to drive the truck. He was in the cab of the truck and did not appear until the shosho squad and a number of doughboys had run out of the woods and crossed over to the gun. They hardly felt like killing him in cold blood, so his surrender was accepted.

The ragged officer and the officer who had been with Eadie conferred, with many sidelong glances at the latter. The doughboys examined the gun and truck with interest.

The ragged lieutenant came over to Eadie.

"Say, soldier," he said, "what outfit do you belong to?"

"I'm a soldier of fortune," said Eadie, grinning.

"Now listen," said the ragged officer. "You're no crazier than I am. You're too good a shot. What's your name?"

"Just call me the Fighting Artilleryman," said Eadie.

"Well, have it your own way," said the ragged man; and, calling his scarecrow men about him he proceeded northward, along the edge of the forest.

EADIE wandered aimlessly out to the road. He thought he would climb to the top of the hill and see what was to be seen there. Soldiers continually passed over the crest, and it appeared to be safe.

When Eadie had come out of the field and was on the road he took note that the battle was not yet over. White clouds of smoke rose where grenades were bursting; a Yank machine-gun crew were firing not a hundred yards away, and the little clumps of infantry still ducked in and out of the woods and advanced across the fields by rushes.

Eadie went up the road and sat down on the bank. He was at the top of the hill, and the whole countryside lay stretched before him. Behind him the city, the valley of the Marne, purple in the twilight, and the great forest to the east. He recognized those woods now; that was the forest of Barbillon. Far away across the river were the rolling hills where his division had fought back the German onset five days before.

Eadie rested his aching head in his sore hands. He was still unwounded and undecorated. He was beginning to fear that he had made a fool of himself. The temporary elation over the discovery that he was not wanted for murder had all disappeared.

"I should have known better," said Eadie. "A wild, crazy rumor. He said a mail orderly started it. *I* asked a mail orderly if he knew anything about a fight. A traffic man said he had heard of it. Who told the traffic cop about it? Eadie, you're a —— fool!"

He thought bitterly of what the old man would say to him for being away for twenty-four hours. True, the lieutenant colonel in Château Thierry had told him to go, but Eadie had had no business to go as far as the city. He thought sadly over the whole time since he had met the M. P. on the road.

"You —— fool," he kept muttering to himself.

But why had all the Yanks run off so suddenly that time at Viels Maison when the square had been deserted?

"Gee, and it was pay-day, too."

Remember when the M. P. said that? They had gone to be paid. Sure enough, they had gone to be paid.

Some men came up the road and stopped on the crest of the hill. They set up a small table and began to unfold maps. Eadie was looking at the road and thinking that the price of folly is out of all proportion to its worth. One of the newcomers looked sharply at Eadie.

"Why, what the —— are you doing up here?" he cried.

Eadie looked up. The men he recognized instantly. They belonged to the same battalion that he did. They were observers, and the officer with them was Lieutenant Garfield, who had once owned the blouse that Eadie wore. They all looked at Eadie in surprize.

"I'm just looking around," said Eadie lamely.

The men still looked.

"Why, I thought you was on your way home!" cried one.

Eadie grinned.

"Not yet," said he.

The officer bent over the maps on the plane table, and Eadie drew a deep breath. Garfield had not recognized his blouse. Torn and dirty as it was, and with the braid gone from the cuffs, it hardly looked as it once had.

The man who had spoken first crossed the road to Eadie.

"Did they pull you off that detail?" he asked with sympathy in his tones.

"What detail?"

"Why you were detailed to go home; I saw the order."

Home. HOME! To go home!

"The major wants to see you."

Eadie remembered those words.

"There's two guys goin' home as instructors."

He remembered those now, likewise.

"Listen," said Eadie hoarsely, "if you're kidding me, you'd better start saying your prayers now!"

"I'm not kidding you," said the other man. "It was all over the outfit that you and the sergeant-major from the second battalion had been detailed to go to the States."

Home. To go home, back across the sea, away from clanging shells and clattering machine guns, away from the stench of gas and smoke and burning wood, of rotten blood and festered flesh, away from the sight of ruined houses and unburied dead.

Home, where one ate three meals a day

and slept all night long in a clean, soft bed. Home, where every one spoke a Christian tongue, where cigarets and ice-cream could be bought every few feet. And he, Eadie, had run away up here to the front, so that he wouldn't be sent home.

How many times that day had he risked his life wildly, foolishly, needlessly! And what a long way he was from the battalion even now! With this thought he began to run down the road, staggering as if he were drunk and unable to move his legs fast enough, barely able to progress, hindered by some invisible force, as people are in dreams.

Going home! Would he ever get to the battalion? And after that, to the railhead? If he could only get back far enough he might catch a truck. It would soon be dark.

Eadie rushed down the road, past marching men that looked at him strangely, through the town, which was now filled with artillery going up to position on the hill. He panted hoarsely. He threw away the rifle that he had carried all this way, not knowing that he held it in his hand.

He dashed down through the houses, across the gardens in back, and thus cut off some of the road. He ran until he was breathless and then walked a way and then ran again.

He met four men going in his direction and would have passed them, but they called to him by name. They were men of his regiment.

"I hear you're goin' home," cried one.

"Gee, you lucky guy!" said another enviously. "Goin' home! Won't you be the works, though!"

They pressed about him to shake his hand, to offer congratulations.

"Say," said one, "if you're ever in Decatur, Illinois, I got a sister lives in Mattoon, right near there. Tell her I'm all right, will yuh?"

"Write my mother when you get home," said another, "and tell her all about the scrap. They won't have no censors there, you know. Tell her I've got made a lance corporal. Maybe you'll see my brother; he's at Camp Taylor."

"Look, wait just a sec, will you? I want to write a letter, and you take it out with you, will you?"

"Look, gang," said Eadie. "I'm in a fearful rush. I've been fooling my time away up here all day, and I must get back as soon as I can."

"Why, we'll go along with you," said the men. "We come back to guide up the ammunition-trucks. Let's all go. If you get a chance, write us once in a while. Ain't you the lucky one, though!"

The road made a sharp bend here, and Eadie could see another across a field.

"Let's cut across the field," he said. "I can see the road again over there, and we'll save a lot of time. See, the telephone men are stringing wires straight across instead of following the road."

"Sure," said the other men, so they started across the road, clinging at Eadie's elbow, asking him to see their mothers or their sweethearts, or to send them razor-blades or sweaters, or pipes or dice, and beseeching him to write them when he got home.

Up on the hill above the town a squad of doughboys stopped to examine the German gun that still stood as it had been left. One of them gave a few turns to the elevating-gear. Another peered through the peep-hole in the shield.

A third had mounted to the seat where the gunners ride on the march, a cushioned seat between the gun-barrel and the wheel, in front of the shield. Then he tried to climb over the shield, and by standing on the gun to get to the ground. His foot slipped, and he fell crashing to earth between the breech of the gun and the wheel. The gun spoke a thunderous word and leaped like a living thing.

"Holy mackerel!" cried the doughboys. "It was loaded!"

The man who had fallen picked himself up; and, aghast at what they had done, the doughboys fled into the gathering night.

Eadie and the men with him heard the shell coming. They lay down immediately, for the sound of it was very loud. It swooped from the heavens, struck the ground and burst. The smoke shot upward; it curled itself about like a snake with lifted head, festoons and flowering streamers of it twisted and coiled. Finally it settled into a thin haze and then drifted away. The telephone men, who had thrown themselves down at the sound of its coming, arose and looked to see where it had burst. There was a black, smoking hole there, and about the hole what appeared to be a pile of fresh meat. The telephone men went on with their wire, looking very white about the lips.

THREE men stood upon the road and looked across the fields to the bend where the road went up to the town.

"There's some stiffs out there," said the tallest of the three. "We better go get 'em."

"I see 'em," said one of the others. "I wish they wouldn't get killed so far off the road. We'll get all tired out the first thing."

"Yep," agreed the other two men, looking toward the east, where the sun rose through a dark mist, "it's goin' to be another scorchin' day."

They crossed the field to the pile of bodies and began to search for identification tags. Two men hunted for the tags, and the third wrote down the names in a book. The two that hunted expressed disgust and got them sticks to find the tags with. They turned the last body on its back, and this tag the man was able to find with his hand. He tore off the gas mask, gave the shirt a rip and thrust in his hand.

"My God!" he cried. "This one's warm!"

The other two hurried over, and one of them felt of the man's heart.

"It's beatin'," he said. "That guy's alive! Hey, stretcher-bearers, this way! Come over here! First aid!"

IT WAS borne upon Eadie's mind that he might open his eyes. After debating with himself a while, he did so. The light hurt them, so he closed them again; but after a few attempts he could look about him. "Where am I at?" he muttered.

At once there was a stir beside him. A woman in blue stood up and seized his wrist.

"Oh, Clifford," she called, "this man is coming to, and I'm afraid he'll begin to fuss!"

Eadie grinned at her.

"What's the matter with me?" he asked.

"You're all right," she said. "You're at Jouy-sur-Morin. You're 'way behind the lines, where you're perfectly safe!"

Eadie looked up at the roof. He perceived that he was in a tent, a tent that was all ragged and torn, and full of jagged holes. He laughed harshly.

"Girl," he cried, "who put those shell-holes in this tent?"

She made no reply, but smoothed his brow. He tried to see where he was hit, but could not lift his head. He was in bed, that he knew; but whether he had any feet or hands left he could not tell.

His mind went back as far as he could remember. It had been night and was now day. He had crossed a field, and a shell had whistled. And here he was. But why had he crossed the field? Why, he was going home!

"Home!" cried Eadie.

He laughed again.

"Home. This looks a lot like home! Ah, well, maybe it was just a rumor anyway."

He lay a while looking at the holes in the tent; then he seemed to spin around several times and then fall off the bed into unbelievable darkness.

On the other side of the bed the orderly straightened up.

"He wasn't very wild, was he?" he remarked.

"He hadn't ought to be," answered the nurse, putting away her needle. "I gave him a shot that would put a horse to sleep."

"What's the matter of him?" asked the orderly.

The nurse felt of Eadie's pulse before replying.

"Shell-shock and gas," she said, "to say nothing of general collapse. But he's not so sick but what he'll be roaring for something to eat when he wakes up again. Now you dust along and see what that man in the corner is yelling about."

ANTONIO

by F. St. Mars

Author of "Blood Brothers," "The Edged Tool," etc.

TONY sat huddled up in the dark, his back against the angle formed by a lower-deck beam and a rib. In front of Tony sat his father, huddled up also and quite silent. Tony was not silent, he was uttering a strange little cry of fear, a sort of gibber, and very good reasons he had, too. He had just seen his father, deliberately and in cold blood, murder his eleven brothers and sisters.

That Tony had escaped so far was simply and solely because he was by far the largest of the family, the strongest, and the most cunning. Now his time was coming, he being the last but not the least. He had not the ghost of a chance, of course, against his big ruffianly father, and he knew it. But Tony was no coward. Any one who had beheld him then, hunched up in the approved fighting-attitude of his race, his yellow teeth showing, his hair bristling and his eyes gleaming like twin lights, would have said that Tony meant to sell his life dearly. And this probably his father, that old, crafty villain, knew. Only that, indeed, had made him pause and try to take Tony unawares.

Tony, you must know, was a rat.

Then, suddenly, without warning, there came a terrible rending, grinding roar from everywhere at once. The ship seemed to rear up like a stricken beast and came down again with a crash that sent Tony's father sprawling half a yard. As he sat Tony could feel the supports behind him bend and quiver and could hear them groan and mutter as they took the strain.

Followed silence down there in the dark between decks, but a great uproar above; muffled shouts there were and the sound as of many people running. Then a heavy bumping broke out beneath them, as if Neptune himself were tapping at the keel asking to be let in. Then silence again, and in the silence, distinctly heard, came the lapping sound and swirl and the gurgle of water inside the ship.

There was no need to tell the rats what that meant; they knew instinctively with a knowledge handed down to them through thousands of generations of voyaging adventuring rats, and both fled instantly.

Tony's father bolted for a hole that he knew, and Tony followed hard in father's footsteps. There was no talk of murder now, no time; the thing was to get upward and to get upward quickly.

Up through the long, hot, stuffy tunnels tore Tony, following always his sire's scent, till suddenly out he bounced into light and fell with a crash. The fall, however, was short, and Tony had bounced to his feet on the instant, to find himself in the steward's pantry. The electric light had died nearly down, but there was enough for him to see by and to note that his father had vanished, that the place was empty and that the door was open.

Out into the alleyway fled Tony and along it with the sound of gurgling, swishing, talking waters always in his ears. Then suddenly, just as he was opposite a gangway that had been lowered for the purpose of putting passengers into a boat lowered from above, the steamer lurched heavily, bumped and lurched again.. For one brief, frantic moment Tony was conscious of scratching, scrambling, sliding and squeaking all at once in a vain endeavor to keep his footing on and climb up the slope of a deck steeper than the roof of a house. Then something else came slithering down the planks, hit him with a blow that almost knocked him silly, and together the thing, with himself blindly clinging to it, fixed like a limpet in the last extremity of fear in fact, shot out into space, down, down, down, down, and hit the surface of the sea with a *plop!*

Except that he had fallen into a glassy sea with a long, following oily swell behind it, Tony could not see anything very much, and he was a rat. No wonder, therefore, that the officer of the watch had not been able to see anything at all, and had piled his ship up on a sandspit or reef or something in consequence. Indeed, all that Tony could himself make out was the dim black outline of part of the great steamer, heeled over and drunken to look upon, towering above him; the dim red blur of the electrics now nearly out, and fog, fog, fog everywhere above and around.

Once he heard the regular *rup-romp* of oars in row-locks dwindling away into the chilly void, and once the same noise, followed by the vision, dimly vouchsafed, of a boat suddenly almost on top of him, of a voice crying above his head: "Look! A rat! They know! The beggars know," and then the sounds dying away again as the boat was swiftly withdrawn. Then came the roar of escaping steam and the boom of a rocket leaping skyward.

BUT Tony was swiftly drifting away to leeward on a racing tide, or current, or some agency of the kind, and almost before he quite realized what was happening the steamer had faded back into nothing, the beat of oars came to him muffled as from a great distance, and he was alone on the face of the waters, uncertainly perched, crouched, wet and trembling, on the top of a cork life-belt, the same as had hit him when the ship heeled over and carried him into the sea.

Alone? No, though, not by a bushel-basketful. There were others adrift in space besides himself—others that came and went, appeared and vanished out of nowhere into nowhere, giving no explanation the while, like things in a dream.

First he met his father. The meeting was a strange one, almost as strange as the fact that they should meet at all. He could only see his father's head above the water and judged by certain sounds that he was in trouble. So close did the sharklike face of the old ruffian pass that Tony could have reached out and jerked his father on to his own raft. He did not, however. Perhaps the current was too quick for him. Perhaps. But who knows. It certainly was too quick for his exhausted parent and shouldered him on irresistibly when he tried to turn. There came another, on his back this one, his light belly visible, and his little, handlike pink paws pointing upward as if to save himself from being stifled by the impending, blanketing fog, only he, or she, was a dead rat already.

There came, too, with much splashing and puffing, the head and shoulders of a man in a life-belt, swimming steadily and noticeably across the current as one who knows where he is making for. He saw our Tony, for he turned his head and looked at the floating, bobbing belt and laughed to himself hollowly and echoingly through the fog.

"Yes, there's many as'll go that way tonight," he spluttered, grumbling, like all who speak to themselves.

"But t' sea, with the current. Heaven be praised! I smell the land." And he dissolved into the gloom forthwith.

After that time passed uncounted. Day came at the end of centuries of aimless floating and glared helplessly through a fog that it could not lift, like a light through stained glass.

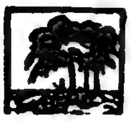
Once a gull floated, ghost-fashion, overhead, and once a steamer unseen went threshing and throbbing by, and once also a bell rang so loudly and suddenly through the murky nothing that it nearly made Tony loose his hold and fall into the water. After the bell—a long time—a fog-horn split the air overhead with a bellow as of some lone giant bull, and there was the sound, only a half-caught whisper it was, heard and gone again, of some one shouting very far away.

The vessel that owned the fog-horn went, but the shouting did not. It broke out at intervals all through the dreary day, growing nearer and gradually nearer each time. It was the cry of one in more or less distress calling to a ship—any ship—to come and find him in the fog, but none did apparently. There was only that voice like the cry of a lost soul adrift in the infinite, and the rat, left on the waters of all time, it seemed.

Meanwhile Antonio was growing unhappy. He had cleaned himself half a dozen times, and gone to sleep once, and discovered that one could not live forever adrift on a cork belt. The belt had its limitations. It is impossible to know precisely how long a brown rat can live without a drink, but it is not for a great time, about as long as a tramp possibly, and twenty-four hours. For this reason Tony, who was already hungry, was beginning to grow thirsty, and he seemed to know that it would kill him.

To go on with, Tony was not, as he at first thought, quite alone even yet. There were others, people of the deep, who accompanied him, or, at least, came to see how he was getting on from time to time. Sundry swirls near at hand on a windless sea, the vision of a razor-sharp fin cutting a line on the swell, a gleam as of silver too near—far too near—and once or twice a single staring eye peering out of the depths, warned him that if the thirst did not take him the unknown fish and crabfolk, who had no doubt been attracted to the wreck, probably would.

Indeed, once something grabbed at his tail, which he had foolishly allowed to hang overside. Perhaps they, whoever they were, had mistaken it for a lob-worm. Tony did not wait to inquire. He curled his tail round him in haste and gibbered his fear and rage at the swirl that followed on its withdrawal. This was getting awful.



JUST about when things were becoming almost too bad to endure—that is to say, toward the end of that day of fog which seemed without end—Tony, who by then was nearly dead with thirst and fright, heard the shouting break out again, and this time quite close. But he was not exactly shouting now, this man. Perhaps he had given it up as a bad job. Who knows? Anyway, he was singing—as all true mariners should do in time of distress—and the name of his song was, "Antonio." You may have heard of it. It had a certain vogue when that man was last ashore in this country.

Tony had never heard of it, but he liked the sound of the voice. It seemed sort of kind and jolly; you bet animals know—and anyhow, anything, even man himself, was better than the twin terror of thirst and fishy fiends.

Slowly the voice drew nearer. Tony could hear the lilting song of the waters under the bows of a boat now; could see the up-thrust bows of a boat dimly appearing, spooklike, with the outlines of the back and head of a man who was paddling leisurely.

The boat passed close to him, so close that he could almost have jumped aboard, and the man's roving eye fell upon him and opened wide with surprize, and his voice stopped.

"Antonio, by George!" cried the man. "Antonio, you little beggar, shipwrecked like me 'er. Come aboard you shall, you little reprobate. Shipmate with me, was ye? Never left a shipmate to drown yet, and I'm not beginning now. It's bad luck. Besides," he added, leaning over and hoisting up rat and raft and all, "this here belt may come in tidy useful even yet—one never knows."

Then he started.

Without the least warning, and with as little fear as if he had been born and bred in captivity and been handled all the days of his young life, Tony ran up the man's sleeves and sat on his shoulder, hunched in his own odd way—which comes of having disproportionately long hind-legs—and looked with his preternaturally sharp little beady eyes straight into the man's face. Some people whose acquaintance with rats goes no further than the glimpse of a vanishing tail, won't believe this, but it's true. Most wild creatures know some fear that will drive them to any tameness. Thirst is the rats'. Tony was asking as plainly as he could, without speaking, for water.

"Well, I should murmur!" gasped the man, lifting Tony down gingerly. "Poor little ——! Starving, I suppose—just dead beat."

Tony's heart was going pit-a-pat against his sides till it seemed like to break loose, but he made no effort to move from where he sat on a seat while he watched the man bend over and take food and water from a locker—the boat was, of course, fully victualed—and offer Tony the part of a biscuit. But hungry as he very likely was Tony could not eat. He was dying of thirst, slowly and by inches, and he rolled over on his side even as the man put down the food.

The man seemed unhappy.

"Take a hold on yourself, lad," growled he. "What's up? Feel sickish? Here, take a drink."

He gave Tony water, and Tony drank. My, how that rat drank! One would think he hadn't had a drop of moisture for a week. He drank till he seemed in danger of blowing up. Then the man gave him soaked biscuit, and he sat up and ate that prettily. In ten minutes he was almost his old rascally self again, and started in, where he sat on the seat, to clean himself vigorously, for the touch of the human hand is pollution unspeakable, to a rat's way of thinking, and must be removed as quickly as possible. The man stroked him twice with his finger, and each time Tony carefully cleaned himself where the finger had touched. He was quite tame.

It was some time after this, and just when, as far as could be seen from under the curtain of fog, the sun was beginning to set, when the second rat turned up. The man was putting away his things in the locker and moving some ropes when the rat hopped out from nowhere special—which is a way rats have, and promptly almost rolled over with exhaustion.

She was a beauty, white as snow from head to tail, and with pink eyes.

Antonio regarded her curiously, his long whiskers working hard the while. So did the man. Then:

"What, *more* water?" smiled he, and fetched it. "I've a notion you're the white rat of the galley the chaps spoke about this last two trips. But how did you come to be here?"

The white rat did not answer. She only drank.

As a matter of fact she was probably an 'escape,' for goodness alone knows what seamen and emigrants don't take with them aboard ship, and she had probably made her headquarters in the boat throughout the voyage, as it was one of those that had been kept nested on the deck, and not swung from davits like the rest. Anyway, there she was, recovering fast and already showing a desire to clean herself—just as if she wasn't about twice as clean as a new pin already.

Then the boat grounded. There came a scraping, soft, soft, squelching, and the nose of her climbed up in the air, and she stopped.

"What's worrying *Ada* now?" quoth the man coolly, leaning on his oars and looking round. Then, with a shout: "Land ho! Antonio, you little rascal, it's land; it's——"

He sprang up and felt with a wary oar over the bows.

"And if it isn't quicksand, or mud, it's home!" he finished.

Quick as a flash he hopped out over the bows and investigated. His feet sank into soft, dry sand, firm as firm, and the sound of a sudden little puff of wind rustling among the dry scales of bent-grass came to his ears.

The fog began to move.

As the man pulled the boat a little way up on to the sand, a second, stronger and longer, puff of wind struck his cheek, and the fog began to peel quickly.

A third puff of wind whispered through the now dimly seen bent-grass a few yards up the sandy beach, and the man laughed joyfully.

Then it began to blow steadily, though lightly, and almost before one could realize what was happening, the fog was torn asunder, rent, dispersed, and all the world stood clear in the red light of the setting sun.

Tony sat on the gunwale and stared out at this new land. Up the beach were sand-dunes, fantastic, dry, wind-carved and desolate; behind this, and far enough behind it to make it fairly evident that they had struck an island, ran out east and west a thin golden ribbon of sand, backed by the eternal foreboding, frowning loneliness of "the wine-red moor"; while on the left hand, afar off where the sand ran out to a rocky point, there appeared, tip-tilted and leaning drunkenly, the funnel and masts of a steamer aground—the steamer that he had left the night before.

This much he saw, but the man saw more than that. On the end of the rocks, silhouetted against the furnace-red sky, sat a man waving a garment—a nightshirt, it may well have been—at the seascape. This, then, the man saw and, seeing, yelled aloud, threw up his arms, capered and rushed for the boat.

Now even a tame rat is a bundle of nerves, let alone a wild one. Both rats jumped, as if they had been struck, at the man's sudden yell, and when he hurled himself down the beach toward them it was too much; they bolted. In a flash they leaped from the boat, and quicker than a wink, were hidden past all finding among the tussocky masses of the marram-grass on the dunes.

As for the man, he laughed as he pushed off. He was a good sort, but just humanly anxious to get back to his own kind. He went, therefore, but before he went he placed food and water for the rats. Sailors are superstitious men, and no doubt he thought the rodents had brought him luck. Anyway, these things he did, and in a very short time he and his boat became a speck dwindling far across the opal sea.

ANTONIO, from under the spikes of a cluster of frosted sea-holly, watched him go critically. Then he cleaned himself yet again, licking his paws, cat-fashion, and taking especial care about his goblin-air ears. The only spot that he could not reach thus was that at the back of the neck, and this he scratched with his hind foot. Then Antonio turned to business—the business of an explorer in a strange land.

The sea was darkening over by this time rapidly; the sun hung low, like a half-open furnace door, in the west; a star or two—"gimlet holes in the floor of Heaven"—had come out; the last herring gulls were going by on their mysterious evening flight; the last cormorant had passed like some black and evil shadow, flying low with long neck outstretched, across the water; and the plaintive whistle of night-feeding ringed plover and redshanks came to him from the ribbon of sandy shore. Once a green plover called.

Antonio came out and hopped along the beach. On the sand he made no sound, and he was scarcely visible now, merely a squat, hunched, elfin shadow, moving about ghost-like here and there. He was investigating the provisions. Possibly he suspected the man of some foul intent at the last; such things had been known. But in the end he drank—he did not feed—and passed on. The lady in white did not appear to enter his mind, though you may bet she was watching him with her pink eyes from the shelter of some lurking-place.

Antonio moved very quietly along the shore, barely outside the shadow of the bents at first—where he found and ate various seeds of unknown origin—but later, when a pale and consumptive moon leered forth, he moved farther down and inspected the black ribbon of flotsam that always lines high-water mark.

Suddenly he froze. Something alive was near him. He couldn't see it, but he could hear it making a little sucking, sighing sounds on some wet sand, as if it were in trouble. Finally it moved, and he saw that it was a bird, not big, but dainty and fat, long-legged, about seven inches from beak to tail, and of a wary disposition. The odd sounds came not from the bird, but from the bird's beak, probing the sand for worms. It was a ring plover.

Antonio crouched lower. Here was a supper if only he could get his rush home, if only he could screw his courage up to the sticking point.

Anon came a low, soft whistle, and more birds, moving swiftly through the magic silence of the place on the long-hooked wings, beat by swiftly and settled with the first one. Antonio said nothing, but waited. He was not afraid of these birds, but of the place. It was all so strange and quiet. Any death, he thought, might come at him suddenly out from the grotesque shapes of the sand-dunes. And—lo!—even as he looked round furtively with something of these thoughts in his brain, there came a swift padding of soft feet behind him, and something furry and warm and traveling at high speed knocked him nearly flat and fell on top of him.

Tony, who came of a fighting stock as all brown rats do, bit upward savagely and in a manner strangely suggestive of a shark, as he lay, and the animal thing above him, which was about twice his own size, squealed. It struggled and kicked with a madness of terror—nearly pounding the gasping Tony flat—and it squealed. The squeal was the worst part of it; it was so horribly child-like and pathetic.

Then Tony bit again, and the thing bounced clean up in the air, came down—on Tony—and went. And Tony, picking himself up very quickly, watched, as well as the sand round his eyes would let him see, the white tails of two rabbits—like tufts of cotton wool—bobbing away into the darkness. Evidently he had been run into by two rabbits at play. If they had been dogs, though, they could not have frightened him more.

An hour later found Tony round on the other side of the island, the side which faced the mainland. He was still on the shore, and had by that time got pretty hungry, as well as found out the fact that he was on an island.

He had interviewed a razor-fish, open, and nearly got his inquisitive nose caught in the shell as it closed; he had stalked a spidery little bird, who was a dunlin and far too artful to be caught; had met a whelk and eaten it, and had nearly run into, and been upset by a small, stranded, but very efficient octopus, who squirted ink at him and removed into a pool; and he was now following inland a sort of road which led across the water at low tide on to and into the islands.

Very carefully moved Tony along the sandy road in and out round the splayed feet of the sand-dunes. The road had apparently not been used for some time and was all but obliterated, but I suppose he thought that it must lead somewhere, and, being of human origin, would probably lead to a house. And it did.

THE house was big and still and silent, surrounded by an acre or two of tangled furze. There was no light in that house, and the moonbeams, bursting in by the roof, shone out at the broken windows. A creeper rustled and made uncanny noises in the wind against the wall, and somewhere a door, half-hanging on creaking, rusty hinges, gave out complaints as of one in pain.

Tony entered the courtyard, as it were on tiptoe, with every nerve on the alert, and paused in the shadow of an old and rotting tub. Nothing there! Nothing, that is, if one excepts the eternal lisping whisper of the sand, drifting in at one doorless gap and out at another, where the door still hung. But there was another sound also, a sound which had drawn Tony to the place as by ropes. Plainly audible in the pause of the light breezes came the *drip-drip-drip* of falling water. There was a well in the middle of the courtyard, and a pipe and a trough, and the trough was running over, probably because the well was overflowing.

These things Tony noted carefully, his little quick eyes stabbing every shadow, his little sharp ears drinking in every faint sound, his long whiskers and pointed nose analyzing and taking note of anything which eyes and ears between them may have overlooked. For ten minutes—nay, for fifteen, he remained thus, a small graven image in the darkness. Then he moved out.

Instantly, as if it had been waiting for him to move, there came a long, sibilant, infernal hiss, which seemed to fill courtyard and echoing house and earth and sky alike with a warning horror, and Tony, whose wits were sharper than any needle, leaped sidewise as he had never leaped before.

He had not waited to see what the hiss was, or where it came from. He just sprang madly, convulsively, blindly and for his life. And it was as well, for in the silence that followed, while he crouched, trembling from head to tail, peering wildly into the dark, he could distinctly hear an ungodly, terrifying, rustling, slithering sound, that moved slowly away from his path and died out in the dim, dank, dumb darkness of that awful house.

Tony had nearly trod on a snake, lying in the sand and the moonlight, and whether poisonous or not matters little really, for a snake is a snake always and goes crooked to its hole, and who would trust a snake any way? Certainly no rat in his senses would.

This episode took Tony another ten minutes of graven-image motionlessness to recover from, and then he moved again. That movement went as far as lifting one hand-like forepaw, then the other, and keeping them there. That was all there was to it—nothing else.

One slow, silent minute slipped by—another—a third—a fourth—a fifth. A rabbit came into the yard, gave one look and half a sniff, and went out of it again, very much faster than he, or she, came in. Six minutes—seven—eight slipped by. Some bird of the night settled on the grass-grown wall, of the courtyard with a stiff ruffle of wings, peered down, started, said something in an undertone and went away again.

Nine — ten — eleven — twelve minutes came and slowly went. Heavens! Was Tony going to stay all night? If the uncouth beastie had in that first moment been smitten by lightning into a figure of ash he could not have moved less. He just sat, humped-backed, bent, throwing a squat blob of a shadow, grotesque beyond measure—staring, staring, staring. And good reason had he to stare.

By the water-trough was a thing—shameless, stark, revealed, a horror and abomination in the pale light of the treacherous moon. Bald fact compels the statement that it was a rat, and it was perhaps well that bald fact exists. It, the accident there by the trough, might have been mistaken for a deformed dwarf, smitten with a leprosy of long standing, else. It was not a nice sight, not a nice sight at all. It would have frightened you, or me, at that hour in that spot, even; it would have any nervous person all to fits. It was worse than any nightmare beast. It was a thing escaped from down below and never ought to have been allowed up here at all.

To begin with, its size was out of all proportion to that set out for rats, brown, black, white, fawn, piebald, skewbald, or any other color, or mixture of colors, mentioned in the natural history books, a rat run to seed, so to speak, a very leviathan among the whiskered ones. But that was the least of its horrors.

Something had happened at some unknown date to its ears; they looked, what was left of them, as if they had been caught in the cogs of some machine, and the remnants were not sweet to behold. Moreover, the moth—or truly it may have been only mange—had got into the abomination's fur, so that at no remote date there seemed a danger of its becoming bald altogether, and where the fur wasn't the cog-wheels of that machine had been—at least it looked like it.

Finally, the catastrophe on four legs had no long tail, only a stump, like a finger, and it wagged, wagged horribly in the moonlight as its owner lapped up water after the manner of a dog. This, except, of course, for Tony and the white doe rat, was the only rat left alive on the island, the captain, boatswain and midshipmite, all in one, of the rats that had once lived there. One could guess it: murderer and cannibal was writ large upon him.

The horror was not long over his drinking, and when he had finished he did not clean himself, as one would have expected a rat to do, but pivoting round on an instant right-about-face, sat—hunched up of course in that unnice way rats have—facing Tony. Now this was a shock to Tony, because he hoped he had not been seen, thought, in fact, that he had played the freezing trick to good advantage, for both animals and birds find it very hard, if not nearly impossible, to make out a motionless creature by sight alone. Even now, of course, Tony could not tell whether he really was discovered or not. He could see the eyes of the horror gleaming with, it seemed, a peculiarly malignant cruelty, but that proved nothing.

So, therefore, they remained for, it may be, thirty seconds, whilst the door creaked, and the creeper scratched, and the sand sifted into the courtyard and sifted out again on the lap of little wind eddies sprung from nowhere.

Then the horror turned away, took three leisurely hops toward the house, and—oh help!—spinning about like a top, hurled himself at Tony in a single streaking, dumb dash. The brute had seen Tony from the very first, but noting that he, too, was a very big rat, young, sleek and full-powered, sought to play off cunning against him and catch him unawares. Of course it need hardly be explained that, being the only two male rats there, they could hardly be expected to agree.

WHAT followed only the shadows and the beetles, the spiders and the snake, who lived in that house—which was a deserted half-ruined house—know, and they won't say, being all dead by now. Anyway, just before dawn a weary and worried-looking but unscathed Tony might have been seen leaving that house cautiously and making his way back to the shore. Apparently he had simply run from the enemy the whole time, but there must have been a good deal of the almost fiendish cunning of that old ruffian, his father, in him, or else he could never have got out of that deserted house alive even, let alone unscratched, as he was.

Dawn found Tony eating and drinking of the bounty of his human friend and protector at the place where he landed upon the island a few hours before, but the sun failed to discover him hidden under the gnarled and twisted roots of the ancient, storm-harried furze-bushes, where, one may presume, he stayed all day.

That night it rained, not heavily, but steadily, and Tony kept to the shelter of the furze, which, by the way, scarcely sheltered him at all, and let the wet in almost as badly as a sieve. He had seen nothing of the white rat since landing and was beginning to wonder what had happened to her, when something fluttered on the spiky boughs overhead. It was dead dark, and it is a wonder how Tony managed to find his way up that furze-bush with his delicate paws that looked like hands—but perhaps they weren't so delicate as they looked—among those million spikes; but he did.

In the darkness there was a scuffle, a frantic squawking, choked off in the middle into a wild fluttering, a tiny thud beneath, and silence. In a few seconds Tony came down again, treading gingerly and pausing to listen every few strides, in case the island held any more calamities on four legs like the one up at the ruined house, and then, hurrying along under the boughs, dined on the linnet he had caught roosting and promptly slain.

Later, in the top of a hollowed out boulder, he chanced upon enough rainwater for his needs and was just about to return to his hole—for he loathed rain with the intense loathing of most of the burrowers whose fur is not rainproof exactly—when, in crossing an open space of muddy sand, he collapsed in his tracks where he stood at sight of five crabs advancing toward him in that horrible way crabs have—sidewise.

He happened to be between them and the tide, which had retreated and left them in a pool, I think, and I know they charged him with that extraordinary desperate recklessness which seizes all the water people—seals, hippopotami, crocodiles and the like—when they find themselves caught in that position.

Tony had a lively five minutes, and so did the crabs. Four of them gained the water, and one remained—on its back and quite dead—and it was a long time before Tony forgot how crabs can nip, and how they taste when freshly killed.

Finally he visited the store of food and water left by the man, and found all gone—taken by the white rat, to judge by the scent all about, though he could not find her when he searched. It was, however, too wet to search even for her long, and he was glad enough to regain his hole and, after the inevitable clean, to sleep, curled up in a complete ball, his long tail wrapped round him and his nose tucked in between his hind legs.

The night that followed was dead, dumb, still. It seemed as if all the wind had gone out forever, and you could hear the lilting whistle of whimbrel, the soft "Tu-lip!" of ringed plover, and the treble call of the greenshanks along the main shore from miles away. When nature puts her finger to her lips like that, it seems as if she's waiting for something to happen. Even the wavelets seemed to be saying—

"Hush!"

Tony cleaned himself with even more immaculate and fastidious care than usual—some people think that rats are unclean creatures, by the way—sat peering with his black bead eyes out upon the gagged evening for half an hour and hopped out.

This time he went straight away. Apparently he knew very well where he was going, and what he was going to do when he got there. Indeed, he was going for water to the only place on the island where it could be got that night, for it had been hot enough all day to dry every chance rain-puddle ten times over. Tony was, in short, going to have a game at hazard with death.

He approached the old ruined house with triple caution this time, ears, eyes, nose and whiskers working at high pressure to warn him of the dangers of the place. For half an hour he lay privily in the brown plush furze, waiting, watching for movement or sound of anything. From here it was that he saw the snake—even the red viper it was, with the true flat head of the poison folk—crawling, crawling, crawling, not rippling, but with all its body flat and moving at the same instant, make its slow way up to the courtyard and vanish within, and he caught with a shudder the red gleam of the setting sun on the scales of the legless death as it turned.

From here it was, also, that he beheld the linnets and the rock pipits, the pied pert stonechats, the buff and white wheatears, the only melancholy thrush and the sparrow-like reed buntings fly down to the well to drink. Finally, just as dusk shut out the day, it was from this point of reconnaissance that he watched those careless fools, the rabbits, going up one by one to quench their thirst.

At last Tony moved. He knew, probably that where the rabbits found safety, he also would do so. In at the doorless doorway he hopped, putting the rabbits to flight as he came in—perhaps they mistook him for the other rat, whom no doubt they had good reason to loathe—and promptly making the most of his opportunities, he drank his fill. Thus far he got, and was just turning about to sneak away, when the scream came. It came from within the house, tense, high and terror-stricken. Tony froze still as a block of ice, for it was a ghastly sound.

THE NEXT instant, out into the yard, flying for her life, screaming, screaming every yard of the way with a fear that seemed to be driving her mad, raced the white rat, and hard on her heels, his abominable tail jerking, his horrible yellow teeth and relentless eyes gleaming together in the young moonlight, bounded clumsily but inexorably the terror, the ghoul of the place, the giant mangy old buck rat.

Now Tony was a young rat, but he was also an abnormally big one and had just reached his full size, perfect in wind and limb, in tooth and claw, and hard as nails. True, he had never had a real life-and-death struggle and could not gage his strength, but by the same token, also, he did not know his weaknesses.

One likes to think of Tony then, and to picture him as he quietly, coolly and quite slowly gave two long, lazy hops that brought him just behind the tail of the fleeing white one, stopped, spun about and faced the murderer with a gibbering grin that said as plain as words could speak—

"Now we'll settle—once and for all."

For one second, for one brief paralyzing instant, there was an absolutely soundless, breathless pause, then, with a fury and venom which was terrifying to behold, the two bucks flew at each other.

The rabbits peering in at the open door, the natterjack toad peeping out of his hole, the meadow pipit who slept in a broken part of the wall, and the white rat, who had stopped and was cowering, shivering with fear, in a corner—they saw the combat that followed, and they know that any description of that fight would be useless. Rats fight on their hind-legs mostly, all hunched up, and because they haven't fangs, like the real carnivorous animals, they chop with their heads up, shark-fashion, but it isn't nice to watch them doing it. They sat thus, gibbering, each on his haunches, and made rushes alternately at each other's back, while the attackee pivoted like a bottle on a pin and side-chopped.

The old rat was the bigger and the heavier, but he had come to that age when he wasn't quite certain when strength would, under great stress, give place to years. Tony was the smaller, leaner, longer-legged, more angular, and more agile. Moreover, Tony was fighting for love, or the best imitation of love a rat can compass. No one knows what the horrible patriarch was fighting for—murder perhaps.

Times one saw them motionless. Times one saw a whirl. Times they were locked, and times they were a foot apart, and each change took place with the rapidity of lightning. But there was one thing quicker than their changes of front, and that was their nasty chopping bites; these were so quick that you could not follow them at all, and it was only when the moonlight revealed dark stains on the ground around and upon them which was neither paint nor tar, that one realized the terrifying deadliness of the combat.

Up and down and around the courtyard they jerked and hopped and spun, gibbering horribly, but never colliding with anything—probably their sensitive whiskers saved them from that—except once when Tony nearly fell into the trough and only saved himself from murder while swimming by a marvelous side-leap clean over the water that his opponent could not follow.

At last, slowly, inch by hard-fought inch, with tooth meeting tooth and claw clawing claw, the fight began, with many savage return rushes, to work slowly toward the door of the ruined house. The old rat was giving ground, was being gradually driven back by the agile Tony and was going to play his last card—a stand to a finish in the treacherous pitch-black mystery of the house itself.

Back, back, back—back to the door, they circled and drove; back over the doorstep they scratched and scuffled; back into the pit-like blackness of the passage they fought on blindly; back, now grappling desperately, into the threefold mark of a room, and——

A hiss; a sound as of leaves rustling; a squeal, high, long-drawn, and ringing; a thud; a wild, mad, demoniacal scurry; another squeal, vibrant with agony and a fear unspeakable; a thudding sound, as if some unseen person had chosen that moment to strike a whip on the floor repeatedly, and—silence, broken only by the squirming scrape of something in the darkness.

Next instant Tony, torn and dripping with blood, a terrible sight to behold, was standing alone in the moonlight before the white rat, rocking where he stood, and the death squeal of the old buck rat was ringing from within the darkness of the house. He would never prowl in the shadows again, that old buck rat, or in the dark. His work was done. He had trodden upon the snake, and although his almost instant chop of despair had nearly severed the cruel head of the reptile from its body, he had been too late; the poison fangs had struck home quick as thought, and the poison, which never failed, had done its work swiftly and terrifyingly.

Tony and his new white mate were alone upon the island.

"ON LEAVIN' LIEVIN"

by D. R. Oliver

YOU'VE heard that song 'bout Armientieres,
We fellers used to sing 'tween beers
In far *estaminets*,
And other little bits o' rhyme
We used to warble, time to time,
Along old battle ways?
Well, none could hold a candle to
That one we'd start, quite impromptu,
On every blessed night
We'd up and quit that dirty town
Where shells and bricks came tumbling down
Like dicky-birds in flight.
It wasn't such a pretty thing,
But holy mackerel! how we'd sing:

"We've struck a lot of rotten homes since first we learned this game,
And what we're introduced to next may further cause for grievin',
But let the future go to—well—we'll thank you just the same,
For tickled half to death we are 'tis Lievin that we're leavin'."

Along that broken, winding street,
In passing years, went many feet,
A-shuffling up or down,
And many who had sung there, first,
In dueling death had got the worst;
No more would see the town.
But ever did the limbers grind
And carts and new battalions wind
From out that rotten hole
Where boilers fell from out the sky,
And bullets whistled low and high,
And often reached their goal.
It wasn't such a pretty thing,
But lord! those new men learned to sing:

"We've struck a lot of rotten homes since first we learned this game,
And what we're introduced to next may further cause for grievin',
But let the future go to—well—we'll thank you just the same,
For tickled half to death we are 'tis Lievin that we're leavin'."

THE
HARD
GUYS
by
Edward
Speyer

Author of "Hi-Jack."

MR. HENDERSON was at the movies. There was nothing strange in that, not even anything strange in the fact that the drama he was witnessing concerned itself with passion in the desert—love among the oases—with the camel and the palm as its background. Mr. Henderson went to movies of his own accord. The choice of the play simply indicated that on this occasion he was attending the films with his wife. Had he been alone or free to choose, it would have been a film of the great, open West, where Bill Hart used all three of his expressions and bad-men quailed before Buck Jones.

This, Mr. Henderson considered, must be the life. Too fat at thirty-eight, he longed for the back of a stout pony, for the dizzy excitement of the cattle-range, instead of his dull, plodding, largely urban existence.

Sour with a spoiled evening, for he had no taste for Arabian nights, he left the Bijou Theater immersed in unhappy thoughts when word was brought to him of the killing of Tom Farren. It was Gregory, Mr. Henderson's huge, youthful partner, who brought the word.

"Bill," he said, finding Mr. Henderson milling in the crowd at the entrance, "we got to go out to Ecorse right away. A guy named Frazer knocked off Tom Farren in Hogan's Alley, and the chief wants us for to hustle."

"——!" snapped Mr. Henderson. "That's —— near half an hour's drive!"

"What a shame," chimed in his wife. "Will you be gone long? Will there be any excitement?"

"Excitement!" snorted Bill.

There was a world of scorn in his voice. It is hard to get excited about your own profession. To you, the trip to the top of the steel skeleton of a skyscraper would be sufficiently exciting, but to a steel-worker it is his job. To Mr. Henderson, had it been the matter of a cow-pony— But here was simply a murderer.

"We got time to take you home, Grace," he went on, "and I don't think we'll be gone long, but you better not wait up after twelve."

SOME bit of explanation may here be necessary, more briefly and clearly put than was Gregory's account to Henderson. Frazer—"the guy named Frazer"—had been seated on a truckload of beer when deputy sheriffs suddenly appeared and demanded that he give an account of himself. He jumped to run, but saw his way cut off by Farren.

Ordinarily, a bootlegger merely seated on a load of beer would have surrendered and taken his chances, but Frazer had a guilty conscience, or its equivalent in his circles. He was wanted in Ohio for murder,

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"The Hard Guys," copyright, 1924, by Edward Speyer.

and in Ohio murderers are electrocuted, while Michigan has no capital punishment. As an arrested suspect, he would be returned to Ohio to death; if he committed a real crime in Michigan and was caught he would be held for the Michigan courts.

So with everything to gain, Frazer took a chance of a second murder and shot his way to a precarious liberty in the darker corners of Ecorse, and Tom Farren's body lay in the hospital morgue while a call went forth for Bill Henderson, criminal investigator of the sheriff's office.

Henderson, stout, heavy, quick-moving, had the reputation of being a hard man to team with, which meant that other deputies did not like to work with him. He was incurably a leader; he demanded exact obedience in the carrying out of his own ideas and none other; so he was finally partnered with Gregory, a courageous, obedient youth who never had a word or an idea.

This team rolled along to Ecorse, to be met on the road by members of the raiding-party of which the unfortunate Farren had been a member.

"You're sure it was this guy Frazer?" Henderson asked.

"Sure, I seen him, Bill. I seen him before he run, and I seen his picture at the office. They want him in Ohio, murder or something. He's a hard guy."

Farther in the village another deputy informed Henderson that Frazer had run for Crowley's place.

"If he's in there," the man said, "he can't get out. The State Police got the road to Toledo blocked; we got the rest, an' Joe Hudson an' some other guy is in a launch just off Crowley's dock."

"Well, we better go to Crowley's," said Henderson.

"——, Bill," protested the deputy, "they'll knock you off before you get there. Better wait for the gang. This Crowley's a hard guy, and the bunch that hangs out there——"

"They're all hard guys," said Henderson. "They ain't knocked me off yet."

Gregory said nothing.

Crowley's place deserves a word or two. It was in Whisky Row, the close-packed mass of shacks, boat-houses and docks that rims the Ecorse water-front, facing the Detroit River toward Canada. Here is the stronghold of the rum-runners, where whisky and beer, wholesale and retail, are imported, bought and sold. There a sober, sedate rum-runner living quietly with his family and perhaps doing a modest business by bottle and glass to add to profits is flanked by a howling dance-hall where everything ever invented goes, where a judge may rub elbows with the next man he is to sentence.

CROWLEY'S was peculiar. It was not a place that flaunted on the main highway, where autos were parked, radiator to tail-light all night long. It was on the river, a good step away from the street, reached by a crooked drive between houses, a shadowy drive with unexpected turns. It did a neat, steady business in retailing drinks to a regular clientele, but that was not its main business. It was quiet, there was seldom music or song or laughter. A stranger was brought by a friend and even then he seldom felt at home.

So Henderson and Gregory left their car and went their way to Crowley's, passing into the gloom between the two houses that buttressed the entrance of the drive.

"When we get in," Henderson told Gregory, "you stay back of me——"

He tripped on a stone and all but sprawled, the rest of his sentence coming in an indistinct gulp as he recovered. It was—

"—by the door."

Thus he gave Gregory his full instructions, which were simply to protect his rear, to prevent intrusion and to be ready to sweep the room with fire.

Now two things happened as a result of Henderson's stumble. One did not develop till later, but the immediate effect was that Henderson disappeared momentarily from the sight of "Long Steve," who was at the moment waiting to shoot any officer that came along. Confused by the vanishment of his target, Steve neglected to use his gun till both men had passed out of his field of fire.

The lunge in the dark had also hidden Henderson from a boy posted merely as a scout, who saw him too late and bumped into the officer as he ran in the twisting darkness. Henderson grabbed him before he could escape.

"Let me go!" the boy protested, but, not knowing if this one was old enough to shoot and being certain that he was old enough to warn, Henderson kept him closely clutched despite muttered complaint.

"Toledo Red," posted to shoot, heard the outcry and did nothing, because he could not distinguish in the dark mass in the drive which was officer and which was boy. He waited till he caught Long Steve's signal, and the two followed cautiously in the wake of the deputies.

The officers and their captive came abruptly to the door, lighted by a shaded incandescent. Henderson knocked. The voice of some one who had peeped was heard faintly.

"The law's outside."

"Let 'em in," said a voice in authority.

Henderson walked in, looked quickly around, releasing the boy as of no further use. His eyes lighted on Crowley, behind the bar, an alert, good-looking man, getting fat as he became rich, but not yet too fat for comfort, battle or personal appearance. He came around the end of the bar to meet Henderson as the latter stepped forward.

"Got a search warrant?" he asked.

"I'm not after beer," said Henderson. "I want Frazer. Where is he?"

"He's not here," said Crowley.

"You're a liar," the deputy bellowed. "Where is he?"

The company assembled at the tables pricked up its ears. It was not a gentle company, but in its way it was select. Three gunmen from Toledo, effeminate looking youths with polished hair, sat at one table with a girl who was their driver and decoy. At another table were four of the guards who protected Crowley's beer trucks. They were more rugged fellows, lacking the polish of the Toledoans, but they would have shot anybody at the flicker of Crowley's eyelash.

The rest of the guests meant to bolt at the first shot, not from any squeamishness but because the shooting would be a private affair. They were that sort. The gunmen waited an age-long second.

"I don't take that from any one," said Crowley firmly.

"Listen!" said Henderson. "They tell me you're a hard guy. But listen! You ain't a hard guy. I think you're soft. I think you're soft as cheese. You're nothing but a beer-peddler. Now listen! Compared to the guys I handle every day you're so soft that——"

With his left hand, Henderson slapped Crowley's face. His right was in his pocket.

Nobody at the tables moved. Nobody at the tables breathed. Crowley himself was immobile as stone for an instant, then sucked in a deep breath.

"Henderson," he said quietly, "I should kill you for that. You oughtn't to go out of here alive. But I don't want any killing in my place. That's why I told you Frazer wasn't here. He is here. He's behind that door now," he said, waving his hand to the unpainted entrance of the inner room, "and if you go after him he'll kill you."

Now there was nothing in the world that Crowley desired so much at that moment as Henderson's death, but one does not rise to eminence in the perilous bootlegging trade by giving away to emotions. Crowley would kill—but discreetly. He would not kill Henderson; he would not permit any of his guests or employees to kill Henderson—now.

What he planned, while his face still burned from Henderson's blow, was that the officer should open the door and that Frazer should shoot him. Not for his soul would he otherwise have betrayed the man, but now betrayal meant little to the murderer and revenge to Crowley. He would be safe. He had warned Henderson, protected him, even.

As if by order came Frazer's voice through the door.

"Yes, —— you, I'm here, an' I'll shoot the first bull that comes through the door! I'd just as soon kill ten of you as one!"

"Come out of there, Frazer!" Henderson commanded.

"Come an' get me, you yellow hog! The door ain't locked!" Frazer taunted.

They could hear the key turn in the lock.

Henderson hesitated a perceptible time. To those in the room, to the man behind the door, he seemed to hesitate at the risk. In reality he was considering whether Frazer might be directly behind the door and so debating whether a shot through the panels might not be effective.

"I may be soft as butter," said Crowley, leaning easily against the bar out of the line of fire, "but Frazer is a hard guy."

The company grinned warily. Henderson did not hear. Confident that Gregory, still close to the entrance, could sweep the room with his fire if needed, he pulled out his revolver and advanced to yank open the door.

Now came the second fruit of Henderson's stumble. Gregory had missed the last words of Henderson's instructions, half swallowed as he tripped. The last he had heard was, "Stay back of me," and it was the accident of their positions and nothing more that had so far kept him blocking the entrance to the dive. When Henderson advanced, Gregory, acting blindly as always, also drew his Colt and followed close. Being taller, he could see clearly over the other's shoulder.

Thus, believing he was obeying orders to the letter, he left Henderson unprotected from the rear. Immediately the two men who had been posted in the drive to shoot the officers and who had followed to the door only to find it blocked by Gregory, took the opportunity to slip in. Neither of the officers, now surrounded, noted their presence.

Crowley did, however, and, having little confidence in the brains of his gunmen, experienced a wave of fear that they would shoot and involve him in the killing. His frantic signal stayed them just as the company's hair crisped to tragedy.

His gun pointed, Henderson had reached the door. His left hand swung it open with a quick jerk.

"Put 'em up!" he said as the door flew back. He could see nothing in the black well of the room.

Frazer's finger was squeezing the trigger when he looked and saw framed in the doorway—death. His quick thought saved his life as it saved Henderson's. What Frazer saw was Gregory's gun pointed at him over Henderson's shoulder and he knew he could kill Henderson only to die himself by Gregory's bullet. He did not want to die. Life is sweet, even in a penitentiary.

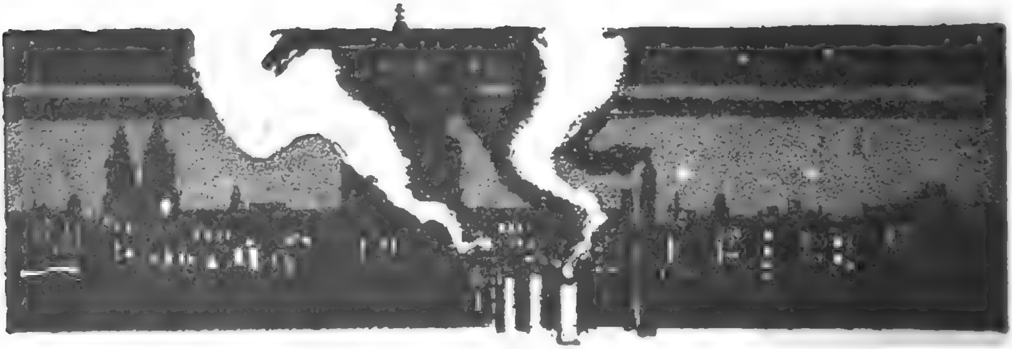
He, "put 'em up," dropping his automatic, and came forward with hands outstretched, Henderson snapping on the cuffs with a practised swing. The officer scarcely noticed the crowd, relaxed and astonished at the outcome, but deigned a word to Crowley.

"Huh," he grunted, "a lotta hard guys. I got a good notion to take you along, Crowley, but we can get you when we want to. Here, you, move along," he said, shoving Frazer toward the door.

In an hour Ecorse had forgotten the arrest, and Whisky Row buzzed merrily and wickedly as the precious cargoes came across the river and drinks were bought and sold. In an hour Henderson was pulling off his shoes in the privacy of his bedroom, smiling and pleased, having noted in passing that the Bijou was showing a rattling good Western picture on the morrow.

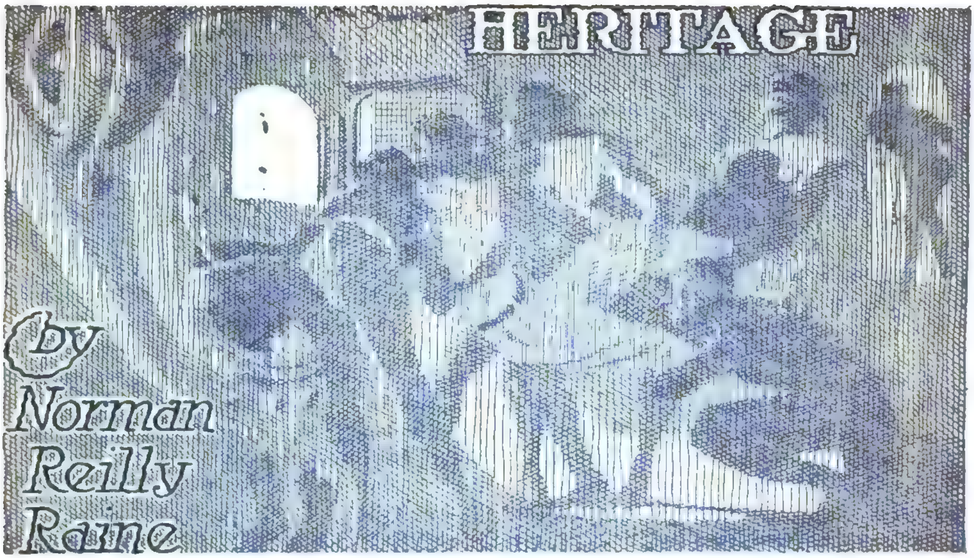
"It's a shame," said Mrs. Henderson, wiping the cold cream from her nose, "the way they take you out nights. Was there any excitement?"

"No," said Mr. Henderson, contentedly wiggling his freed toes, "I just had to go down to Ecorse and arrest a guy."



HERITAGE

by
Norman
Reilly
Raine



I've sweated in Sourabaya,
And perspired in Lahore;
I've dripped all day in the Malay way,
On the docks of Singapore.
I've wilted in Valparaiso,
Algiers and Milan—
But hell was beat when I sampled the heat
Of lousy old Port Sudan!
—*Marine Fireman's Song.*

ALL of which brings us to a night of wind and rain and sobbing tide on the water-front of Shanghai, and a share in the fluctuating fortunes of Mr. Barker, late of Liverpool and the Blue Funnel ship *Tyndareus*. Mr. Barker was a shining light in that flea-bitten, hard-working, hard-swearing fraternity, the marine firemen. Mr. Barker was a peer among peers. The way that he spat was god-like, and to match his insouciant swagger was to march with the elect. But Mr. Barker was down on his luck.

He was not only down on his luck, he was miserable—as miserable as inclement weather and the aftermath of a staggering ten-day drunk can make a man. His abused fibers were a mass of jangling nerves, and he entertained grave doubts as to the amiability of the spectral green leopard which had been his inseparable shadow for the past two days.

The *Tyndareus* which, for several months, he had graced with his labors, and from which he had done a bunk on her last day in port, had long since threshed her way up the Yellow Sea, and his late shipmates spoke of him in sweet profanity. But that was not, at the moment, what bothered the thick skull of Mr. Barker. Shanghai offers a bleak lee shore to indigent seafarers, and his immediate concern was to stow away in the home ship he had noticed that afternoon lying out in the stream, and, incidentally, to evade the attentions of his quaint zoological comrade. In pursuance of these commendable aims, he had, that night, much against his inclination and that of his victim, been compelled to back a 'rikisha coolie against a fish shed in the native quarter and extract the loan of a Mexican dollar wherewith to put his plans into execution.

Now, with a couple of miles between him and his benefactor, who still lay with his yellow, twisted face to the dripping sky, Mr. Barker flattened himself in the shadow of a go-down not far from the Tiaping jetty and edged cautiously toward the water. He halted at a corner, where a wharf light cast a beam athwart the glistening planks, lowered himself to his belly and protruded a discreet head. A solitary turbaned Sikh policeman walked slowly along the quay toward the lights of a vessel noisily working cargo. Waiting until he had halted beside the sweating coolies, Mr. Barker slid across the dock and on to a sampan stage, past which the strong tide fled, sucking hungrily at the filthy piles. At once, a dozen eager shapes leaped out of the gloom.

"Sampan? Sampan? *Chee-chee* monee!"

He silenced them with a sibilant curse, then beckoned one.

"Shipside!" he growled. "Me b'long *Paladin* ship. You savvy *Paladin?*"

The coolie nodded.

"Can do! Savvy *Paladin!*" he said.

Mr. Barker stepped aboard and ducked out of sight under the canvas hood. The boatman strained at the heavy sweep, and sculled slowly against the tide. The dirty waters of the Woosung plucked at the little craft, then swept on to reflect the lights of the city. The rain slashed in increased fury and cascaded down the sampan hood.

After fifteen minutes hard work the loom of a ship arose, black against an inky sky. Mr. Barker emerged and, handing the man his Mexican dollar, demanded change. The fellow commenced the usual protest and Mr. Barker smiled. He could smile like a fiend could Mr. Barker, and that was all that was required. He got his change—in counterfeit coins, as he discovered later. Obedient to instructions, the boatman avoided the lighted gangway and drove his craft against the straining anchor-chains. The gentleman from Liverpool grasped the great links with both hands as the tide caught the sampan and swept it into the night. Five minutes later Mr. Barker lay panting on the *Paladin's* streaming deck.

Lying flat, he listened intently. He was fairly safe from detection, however, for the night watchman would be in the galley, taking shelter. He arose cautiously and, complimenting the windlass as he stumbled against it, made his way to, and down, the iron ladder to the forward well-deck. Again he listened, revolving his bullet head in search for a chink of light. Just as he had figured; the crew lived aft. Under the forecastle head he groped, until, guided by a smell of damp cordage, paint and Stockholm tar, he came against a partition of palings which cut him off from the refuge of the forepeak. He cursed forlornly, but, fingering the heavy padlock, discovered with a thrill that it was not snapped shut.

"Lumme!" he breathed.

Once inside the gate, he closed it, passed his hand through the gratings and snapped the lock shutting himself in.

Then—and then only, he peered out in search of his late companion. It was nowhere to be seen.

"P'raps it was on'y the treemins," he murmured.

The thought was comforting. Climbing over a jumble of gear—buckets, drums of oil, coils of wire rope—things like that—he came to a sort of wide, high shelf, whereon rested a great coiled towing-line. Stiffly but gratefully he hoisted himself inside it and, curling up like a homeless dog, composed himself to virtuous repose.

Mr. Barker was awakened next morning by the deafening rattle of the windlass, and the clank of the anchor-chain being drawn through the hawse pipe. Cautiously he raised himself above the level of the coil.

" 'Ello!" he observed. "Gettin' underweigh!"

He permitted a triumphant grin to wander about his unlovely features, then, as the windlass ceased its clatter, ducked out of sight again. A few minutes later a white sailor came out of the chain-locker and went aft. Mr. Barker, being of that philosophic nature which takes all good as it comes and refuses bootless research into the probabilities, again sought slumber.

During that day and the next he was undisturbed, except by an interior clamor which bespoke a liquor-parched stomach and total lack of sustenance. This he remedied by plugging the lock of the forepeak so that he could not be shut in, and foraging with desperate caution about the ship in the dark hours.

By dint of care and one golden opportunity which enabled him to win a roast of pork and a dish of boiled potatoes, he managed to eke out a fair existence until the *Paladin* was well past Hongkong. That the missing victuals would probably earn native members of the crew divers smacks upon the head in no way affected the appreciative appetite of Mr. Barker.

AT SINGAPORE, where the *Paladin* put in for coal, he took a horrible chance. Certain activity in the vicinity of the forepeak warned him that he was in imminent danger of discovery, so he nipped down the port chain-locker. The risk he ran here was that had it been necessary to drop the port anchor before coming alongside the coal wharf, it is altogether likely that Mr. Barker would have been distributed to the elements through the hawse-pipe in small, assorted pieces. But he dared it, and luck was in his way.

On leaving Singapore, he resumed his old suite in the forepeak, but now Nemesis awakened and started in pursuit. To begin with, the boatswain fitted a new lock to the door—one of the fool-proof variety—which, of course was a direct reflection upon, as well as an inconvenience to, Mr. Barker. It no longer was possible to roam about the ship at night in search of water and food, and Mr. Barker, having, in common with other bold natures, grown over-careless with success, had allowed his stock in hand to decrease, until, as he wrathfully declared in his first evening of close confinement, there was not sufficient to fatten a louse. Add to that another mild attack of the tremens, occasioned by too copious indulgence in a tin of shellac, and the terrific heat occasioned by the narrowness of his quarters and the geographical position of the vessel, which then was but two degrees north of the equator, and it will be seen that his condition was far from enviable.

Three days out of Singapore, Mr. Barker was ill—violently and offensively ill—but it gave him no relief. His tongue was swollen with thirst, and his stomach was numb. Tantalizing visions danced before his eyes, of succulent chops, crisp fried potatoes, luscious fruit, unlimited rootie and delectable bottles of rum. True, he cherished a well-worn quid of tobacco, which he chewed for an hour each day, but the nutriment had passed from it somewhere up in the South China Sea, over a week before. Still, it was better than nothing.

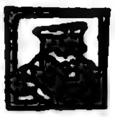
Strange forms appeared unbidden before him. It was not the delirium tremens this time. He ardently wished that it was. Mr. Barker sank into coma which lasted for all of that day and night.

The following morning he awakened into a world peopled by malicious little folk who kept whispering to him that the *Paladin* had been chartered for the express purpose of running him in circles about the Indian Ocean for the remainder of his days. The temperature of the fore-peak was about 108 degrees, but this, of course, he did not know. All he could realize was that he, Johnnie Barker of Liverpool, who had boiled the water for sea-going engineers for eight hectic years and had once been a donkeyman for three days, before being reduced at the instance of an indignant bobby whom he had undertaken to chastise during a moment of mistaken valor—he, the aforementioned Mr. Barker, was to be run in endless and aimless circles, at the whim of a bottle-nosed navigator, who, more than like, didn't know a slice-bar from a piston-ring, and had never handled a fire shovel in his misguided life.

The thought was not to be borne! It was a shame, he declared, weeping loudly, and forthwith decided to put a stop to it. Floating airily from his couch he grasped a short iron bar, and with two strokes demolished the lock of the fore-peak, and, incidentally, half of the gate.

Then, with valiant if uncertain footsteps he staggered from the steaming shadows of his late abode toward the brassy glare of an Indian Ocean sun, that was beating on the metal well-deck in waves of shimmering heat.

II



THE chief officer of the S. S. *Paladin*, Shanghai, for Bombay and Red Sea ports, leaned idly over the bridge-rail. He had been talking to the skipper, Captain Lawson, when he was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Cousins, the chief engineer. The Old Man turned to the chief.

"We've got to drive her, Mr. McMaster!" he said. "I've just had a wireless from the agents that there's a full cargo for us at Marseilles if we can get there by the sixteenth of next month. It'll be nip and tuck and a lightning discharge at Bombay and Port Sudan, if we are to make it, but I think, with luck, that we can just do it. How are things below?"

"Oh, as well as ye can expect, sir, wi' such a lot o' bazaar-scrapin's as we've got in the fire-hole. Ye know what it is wi' natives when ye try to drive the swine. Still, they'll keep up the gage, I doot. Mr. Kearney'll see to that!"

Kearney was the "deucer"—the second engineer.

The chief officer, who, during this conversation, had been gazing lazily forward, took off his cap and wiped the sweat from the inner band, and his glistening brow.

"You'll find it —— hot work, chief!" he said encouragingly. "I bet— Hel-lo!"

He stopped suddenly.

The others, turning to see what occasioned his exclamation, saw his eyes fixed intently toward the blue shadow of the forepeak.

"Excuse me a minute, sir!" he said, and blew his whistle sharply.

The sailor on stand-by came at the double.

"Tell the bosun I want him at once!" he directed.

"What's the matter, Mr. Cousins?" the Old Man asked.

"I'm not certain, sir, but I rather think it's a stowaway. I'll take the bosun along and find out."

He left the bridge.

A few minutes later he returned along the forward deck dragging with him by a firm grip upon his collar, the disreputable figure of Mr. Barker. Attended by the boatswain they brought up on the lower bridge, whence the Old Man had descended to meet them.

"Now then! What's this?" said the Old Man sternly. "What are you doing aboard, my man?"

Mr. Barker raised his feeble head, gazed dully at his inquisitor, murmured incoherently and dropped it again.

" 'E said somethink abaht a blue cat wiv yeller spots, sir," put in the boatswain helpfully, and gave Mr. Barker an engaging thump that nearly shook his head from his shoulders. "Awnser the capting, ye scut!" he growled.

"What's your name?" the Old Man pursued.

"Johnnie Barker!" This with astonishing suddenness and violence.

"Sir; ye dog!" the boatswain hinted.

"Where did you come aboard?"

"Shanghai—sir."

The others exchanged glances.

"Are you a sailor?"

At this juncture, Mr. Barker, happening to raise his glazing eyes, saw, writhing about one of the skipper's brass buttons, a thin and agile lizard of a most marvelous pink. The extraordinary thing about it, however, was that it had a head at each end, each of which entreated the other for a pint of bitters. Feeling that he would be made more welcome if he brought this curiosity to the attention of the company, he reached out to pluck it forth. The Old Man skipped nimbly back, and Mr. Barker slipped senseless to the deck.

The Old Man turned to the mate.

"The poor ——'s starving!" he said. "Stick him in a bunk till he comes round, and when he's all right again we'll find out what he's fit for."

Two days later after recuperation from the effects of his sojourn in the forepeak, Mr. Barker was turned over to the chief, and by him to the second engineer, to work out his passage home.

Now the deucer, Mr. Kearney, was a Tyneside man with peculiar and deep-rooted ideas on many things. For example, he believed that a stowaway was a blight and should be treated accordingly. He extended this sentiment so as to embrace all the tribes of Africa, the Middle and Far East, and expressed his feelings frequently and with great force. As he possessed the physique of a pugilist and the soul of a bully, embittered somewhat, perhaps, by the fact of promotion delayed for many years, it may be suspected that Mr. Barker's outlook was not roseate.

In fact, Mr. Barker's person aroused in the deucer a violent antipathy—not that this was extraordinary. Many people had felt so about that gallant gentleman in his time—but Mr. Kearney's emotions took the form of mad, unreasoning rage.

Their first interview was not encouraging. It left Mr. Barker with the conviction—not unwarranted—that the deucer meant to break his heart. The second had sent for him from the engine-room. As Mr. Barker entered from the fire-hole, bent nearly double to pass between the great boilers, he was the recipient of a stinging smack on the skull.

"That," quoth Mr. Kearney, "is to larn ye to take off yer cap when ye come in the engine-room to talk to me, and that—" he obliged with one on the opposite side of Mr. Barker's figurehead—"is to impress it on ye! Now then! What ship was ye on afore ye sneaked aboard this packet?"

"The *Tyndareus*—sir," he added quickly as he saw the deucer's thin lips close. Mr. Barker was not without rude tact.

"What was ye?"

"Fireman, sir."

"Ye're a liar! Ye was a trimmer! But no matter. Ye're goin' to fire aboard this hooker! We're drivin' her, this trip, an' it'll be hot as Satan's breath—but you'll stay with it if every lascar on the ship quits! Let me see that gage drop, an' I'll keep ye in the stoke-hold till ye're naught but dried blood an' withered guts! Ye'll stand double watches—ye'll carry water for the niggers an' ye'll know what ——'s like if I catch ye idle! Now, get out, ye —— coolie!"

He aided Mr. Barker's departure with a kindly kick.

Now Mr. Barker, as no doubt you have guessed, was no pampered scion of the idle rich. In fact, aspersions without number, and possibly with reason, had in the past been cast upon his ancestry—but he had never before been called a coolie. In addition, he, a white man, one of the ruling caste, was condemned to play lackey to a lot of stinking lascars!

In that black moment the seed of vengeance was implanted in Mr. Barker's receptive heart and watered and tended, day by day, through kicks, abuse and never-ceasing insult. One thing he had in common with his swarthy companions, however. He could bide his time, and when that time came, ah—that was a thought which he hugged to his grimy bosom!

Day after day, night after night he toiled, speaking no word to the sweating natives beside him, obeyed the orders of the quietly malicious *serang*, who rejoiced to find a white man under his thumb, and distilled the poison from his whisky-rotten body. His overtaxed muscles creaked and gave, and for the first few days he lived agony. The thermometer crept up to 118 degrees, and still he toiled while the straining coolies turned sick and faint. Red spots danced before Mr. Barker's eyes, but he grinned obstinately to himself, and the heavy fire shovel abated not a jot of its skilful swing. There is true artistry in the correct manipulation of a marine fire-shovel, when 118 degrees of heat tie men's innards into excruciating knots and the belching furnaces roar in a crimson haze. Having little imagination but plenty of blind, unreasoning doggedness, Mr. Barker stuck it.

NO MATTER how hard he strove to give satisfaction, however, the deucer's venom continued to function in many ingenious, man-killing ways. For instance, on one occasion, when, weak-kneed from heat and fatigue after hours of feeding the insatiable fires—he was standing double watches, be it remembered—he dragged his weary body to the top of the fiddley for a breath of heat-charged air, Mr. Kearney engaged him in conversation. The purport of it was that the cylinder-tops needed polishing and that Mr. Barker was the very man for the job. As this meant working on top of the hot cylinders with the fiery breath of the pounding engines blowing up from below, it may be seen that this was a neat little refinement in torture that Mr. Kearney had devised. For the first time, Mr. Barker openly rebelled and, rebelling, gave his guttersnipe tongue full play.

"Awright! Awright! Ye arf-strung lump o' camel fat!" he bawled, his strident voice hoarse with rage. "I'll 'ave to do it, o' course—but mark me words, swag-belly, we'll meet in ——, some day, me an' you will, an' when we do——!"

The remainder of Mr. Barker's prophecy was interesting but unprintable. The deucer's boot relieved his tongue of the necessity for reply, and Mr. Barker crawled, bleeding but unchastened, on to the sizzling cylinder-tops.

It was not alone the stowaway upon whom the deucer exercised his fancy, however. He extended it to the native firemen and trimmers of his watch. A lascar crew is controlled by *tindals*, or foremen, who, in turn, are responsible to an overseer or *serang*. It is long established custom, in ships trading out to the East, for the white engineers to convey their orders through these overmen. The natives bitterly resent and oppose any deviation from this system.

Such resentment was no deterrent upon that amiable soul, the second engineer, however. It was foot and fist and crackling oath, when he wanted things done—and Mr. Kearney, comparatively new to the ways of his Eastern brethren, went his incandescent way, blissfully unmindful of glittering dark eyes, and the nervous slipping of brown fingers about the hafts of thin, keen blades. They are a primitive lot, the lascars, and an eye for an eye is the keystone of their faith.

There came an afternoon in the molten furnace of the Red Sea. A terrific sun cast waves of shimmering, dazzling heat over brazen sky, and windless, oily water. What slight air was in motion drifted, hot and stifling, off the Sudanese desert, filled with particles of fine gray sand that irritated the nose and throat and made the eyes water, red-rimmed, with imperceptible friction. Mirages appeared in the merciless sky, faint, half-limned, of mud-walled towns and sandy desolation, then faded into burning haze.

The *Paladin* dipped lethargically over the long, blue swells. The metal decks radiated heat too hot for even the toughened feet of the lascars. The ship's officers, off watch, lay supine in long Madeira chairs under the bridge awnings, panting with exhaustion, and calling incessantly for Bass. In the engine-room the temperature was 129 degrees. To enter its precincts was to receive a blast of the inferno. Two lascar firemen and an oiler had been carried out, overcome. Sheer animalism enabled the rest to carry on.

Mr. Kearney, outstretched in his chair in soporific content, stirred lazily. He was in pajamas and slippers, with a yellow silk handkerchief, souvenir of a Cingalese amour, over his mottled face. His pajama jacket was thrown open, exposing a great hairy torso, beaded and glistening with moisture. He resembled a giant sloth. The ringing of one bell at a quarter to four brought him fully awake, for he went on watch at eight bells. He stretched, and yawned, and composed himself for another ten minutes of idleness, then, as the ring of shovels in the fire hole ascended through the fidley top, and the rumble of the ash-hoist broke the peace, Mr. Kearney was seized with inspiration. That inspiration had to do with one Johnnie Barker, late of Liverpool and the S. S. *Tyndareus*.

"Strewth!" the deucer ruminated. "Why didn't I think of that before!"

Then, on reflection, was glad that he had not thought of it before. What time better than today—with the engine-room temperature what it was? Mr. Kearney had never heard of that amiable family, the Borgias, and he thought Attila was the name of a ship, but his nature lost nothing by these omissions. Jubilantly he waited for four o'clock and the beginning of his watch below.

Just as eight bells was struck on the engine-room crow-bar, which marked the passing of the black gang's troglodytic hours, Mr. Kearney put in an appearance. The relieving firemen passed through the narrow door into the fire-hole, their greasy bodies naked to the waist and dirty sweat-rags slung about their necks. When the relief was complete the last to leave the fire-hole was Mr. Barker.

Mr. Barker had just done eight hours of the hardest, hottest work of his toiling career, and now, utterly fagged, and blinded by perspiration he staggered toward the foot of the ladder leading to the open air. Half stupefied, he did not hear the voice of the deucer demanding his presence, but was made quickly aware of his wishes by a heavy hand across his mouth.

" 'Ere!" said Mr. Kearney. "Where the —— was you goin'?"

"Off watch, sir," replied Mr. Barker through puffing lips.

Mr. Kearney shook his head, and a fierce, glad light shone in his narrowed eyes.

"Oh, no, yer not!" he grinned. "Not yet. I've got a bit of a job for ye, first."

Mr. Barker's heart sank. Something swelled in his throat and choked him.

"I've done me double watch in the fire-'ole, sir!" he mumbled thickly.

"Is it talkin' back ye are?" roared the deucer, and, putting forth a massive fist, rubbed it none too gently under Mr. Barker's crooked nose. "I've got a job for ye!" he repeated heavily. "Ye'll sleep the better for it. I want the bilges cleaned."

Mr. Barker stared, unbelieving. After eight hours of torture in the fire-hole, to be sent bilge-diving—and on a day like this! Of all nauseating jobs on a deep-water ship—and there are many—bilge-cleaning is the worst. Even when a low temperature deadens the odor somewhat, it is a nightmare, but in hot weather it becomes ghastly—a foul thing that would turn a pole-cat faint. It means stooping in a confined space, in four feet of indescribable filth and, with hands and a rake, scraping out a month's-old accumulation of grease, ashes, waste and the oily excrement of the engine-room.

To Mr. Barker's bruised lips there rushed, suddenly, a flood of soul-splitting blasphemy. His legs trembled with impotent rage. His hard fists became knots of whitened muscle and for one red moment he was near snuffing out Mr. Kearney's light forever.

Then, amazingly, he swallowed his tumultuous oaths, for a thin voice crept into his brain—a long cherished thought become articulate.

"He can't break you—you're white!"

And a magic thing within his warped, vulgar soul responded. Behind his mask of coal dust, cut by sweat into fine gray lines, was born a spirit—a sublime manifestation of that unnamed something by virtue of which white men rule. If called upon to express his emotions in this crisis, Mr. Barker would have been at a loss, and would most likely have said, self-consciously and with a sheepish grin:

"I didn't arf give 'im a narsty look. Ho! Not arf!"

But the "narsty" look held a quality that chilled the deucer's craven blood and enabled the stowaway to retire unmolested to the bilges.

MR. KEARNEY, with a definite sense of defeat rankling in his mind, despite the fact that Mr. Barker was carrying out his instructions, sought other means as an outlet for his wrath, and to vindicate himself to his own shocked ego. It is significant, however, that the thought of further hazing of Mr. Barker at the moment did not enter his head. But he could think of nothing, and the new sense of inferiority maddened him.

Some time later, he entered the fire-hole. It was a sweating hell of coal-dust, foul air and reeking bodies. The lascars, naked, now, save for a breech-clout and sweat-rag, swung their great shovels, the sweat running down their shining bodies so that they looked like toiling demons in the red glare of the fires. Two trimmers were busy in the sweltering gloom of the bunkers.

As the deucer turned to go, his eye fell on a lascar cleaning his fire. There were stated times for this duty and now was not one of them. Exultation filled him. Here was an excuse to blow off steam. He pushed roughly past the other men and confronted the culprit.

"*Kya ke waste?* Ye scabby black swine!" he roared. "Who told ye to clean fires?"

The native cringed.

"*Bura tindal, sahib!* Him speak too much clinker!"

Mr. Kearney floored him with a cruel back-hand swipe, then swung on his heel and glared about him for the Number One *tindal*.

"*Bura tindal! Idhar ao!* Come here, ye pig-livered Mohammedan scum!" he shouted. "*Jaldi kuro!*"

Wherein Mr. Kearney made a mistake that was fatal. Even in his comparatively short time in the East he had witnessed the surprizingly ingenious death meted out, once to a Dutch captain and on another occasion to a English supercargo, who had inadvertently desecrated a prayer rug. The manner of their demise had made certain dishes unpalatable to him for weeks after.

A lithe, muscular fellow stepped forward, deadly hate smoldering in his sulky eyes. Careless Mr. Deucer. That insult to Mohammed did its work. As he advanced, the *tindal* gave a peculiar, penetrating *clk-clk* with his tongue, then stood, quiet, almost with dignity, facing the infuriated engineer.

"What in —— do ye mean by givin' orders without consultin' me?" the deucer bellowed, and raised his great fist to strike.

Then his arm halted in mid-air, as if paralyzed. His jaw dropped, and the color crept slowly from his face.

In response to the *tindal's* signal, the lascar firemen had ceased work and were joined by the two trimmers from the bunkers. It was then that the deucer saw his danger, and moisture poured down his ashen face. He was surrounded by a ring of murderous black faces, in which eyes flamed with vengeance long deferred. Simulating carelessness, he moved toward the exit. They closed silently in on him. Retreating toward the furnaces, he stood at bay, wild-eyed, licking his dry lips and looking for a way to safety. He tried to shout, but the sound froze in his throat. Then the memory of that mutilated Dutch captain came before him and, pride forsaking him, he whimpered, his stomach cold with dread.

With the suddenness of cats they were on him. Lashing out with feet and fists, he shook them off and laid them bleeding on the stoke-hole deck-plates, but ever and again they were up and attacking. The dim light gleamed on a quick blade. He dropped, spouting blood. Swiftly they ringed him and, lifting him bodily, carried him toward a furnace. With his last, waning strength, he here made a second desperate fight, and they were forced to drop him, so that for a moment he was free of their clutching hands.

Backward he gave, blood-flecked and mad with fear, seeing in the gleam of their fanatic eyes the fate that was in store for him. Again they closed in. The metal of the fire-door burned into his flesh. His craven soul failed him then, and he shrieked—a scream of animal terror that trailed off into a muffled sigh.

III

MR. BARKER, late of Liverpool and the S. S. *Tyndareus*, dragged his poisoned body from the bilges to the engine-room deck-plates and retched miserably. He had done all that human endurance could accomplish, and he was finished—down and out. Covered with the filth of the bilges, weak and dizzy, he knew that it was but a matter of a few minutes ere he must lapse into a state of revolting unconsciousness. Let the deucer have his triumph—let him smash him—kill him! Better to die in the open than down in the bilges like a rat in a midden! Mr. Barker laid his damp head on the deck and wept for sheer heartsickness and bodily exhaustion.

Unaccountably, he was on his feet again.

"——! *What was that?*"

He shook his head to free it of the deadly bilge-fumes that beset it and listened intently. Then, not knowing just why, he set off at a shambling run across the engine-room and through the fire-hole door.

The sight in the stoke-hole petrified him. He was just in time for the last act in the tragedy of Mr. Kearney. A half-dozen lascars were in the act of forcing the body of the deucer into Number Two furnace door. The maddened natives, noting the stowaway, did not heed. To them he was the fire-hole drudge, despised by his own race, a servant to theirs. Besides, had he not more cause, perhaps, than they to hate the man they had murdered?

There is a fine old British Regimental march which goes:

> Some talk of Alexander,
> And some of Hercules;
> Of Hector and Lysander,
> And such great names as these——

Mr. Barker grasped a fire shovel. That shovel was in the hands of a master. As a bolt of Summer lightning—as a snake strikes—as the dust of the wrath of God he was at them—a raging, cursing atom who dealt death with a weapon grown to his hands! A lascar, frothing with religious zeal, leaped at him. He met the man and drove the edge of the shovel at the base of his corded neck. It severed flesh, bone and muscle! Another sprang! The shovel flashed and spattered his brains on the bunker bulkhead! Nor did it cease then. It hacked and stabbed and swung, a dreadful, flashing thing in the hands of its berserk warrior, straight into the thick of the swarming mob which, reinforced as it was by lascars from all parts of the ship, was forced to draw back in bloody marvel at such a man as this.

Forgotten his bitter wrongs! Gone the memory of shameful humiliation before these men! Only the thought that flared through his heated brain—they had killed a white man—one of his race!

"Come on, ye dogs!" he screamed, his bow-legs astride the body of the deucer. "Come on an' face me!"

The man was mad. He mouthed every foul oath that years of the forecastle had taught him. He taunted and defamed them. Wildly he laughed, and scorned their bloodshot eyes and snarling teeth as they advanced on him by stealthy inches. He spat—obscenely—and sneered in their evil faces. He heaped anathema upon their gods and cast doubt upon the virtue of their females.

"Look, ye scum!" he shouted, and beat himself upon the chest with the handle of his shovel, "I'm a white man—just one white man—but I'll fight the whole—— black lot o' yez! I'm *white! White!*"

Again he beat himself, and, carried away by blood lust, challenged them again and again.

Without warning he launched himself full upon them. The shovel flashed like a crusader's sword. There was a welter of stabbing rams and stumbling legs. Shrieks, moans and deep-throated curses mingled with the ring and smash of that inspired weapon against flesh and bone, rewarded, every now and again, by the thud of stricken men. To and fro, up and down the smooth deck plates, slippery now with the blood of the fallen, the battle surged. The stowaway seemed to be wrapped in an invulnerable mantle. Bleeding, he was, from a dozen wicked slashes, yet ever he fought on, and carried the fray to them like an avenging devil.

It was too unequal to last, however, despite the superhuman strength and fighting qualities of the white man. Forced back at length, he took his final stand astride the body of his old enemy and, with rapidly blinding eyes, flung defiance at them as before. They came on with a rush. One! Two! Three! His wicked weapon scored, and men stumbled, with faces shattered beyond recognition, out of the fight. Gathering his remaining strength for one last smashing onslaught, he whirled the shovel above his head and, tripping over the outstretched leg of the dead engineer went with a crash to the deck!

In the very moment of his downfall the thought flashed through Mr. Barker's fuddled mind that even in death the deucer had managed to wreak his spite upon him. Instantly, however, he was on his feet to meet the onslaught. A tawny figure hurled itself toward him, then, seeming to crumple up midway in its flight, pitched headlong to the deck.

At the same instant the room was filled with a heavy report—then another—and a second lascar went down. The remainder made a mad rush for the monkey ladder and the upper deck. The fight had ended like a torch plunged into a pail of water.

Standing in the doorway was the tall form of Captain Lawson, a smoking service revolver in his hand. At his back were the ship's officers, and one-half the white crew.

Mr. Barker reeled drunkenly on his feet. All about him, an unbelievable shambles, lay the victims to his prowess. Himself dripped redly from a score of wounds. But he was happy. He had proven himself. Things were going rather hazy. The stokehold began to swing—right—left—right—left—then in a slowly accelerating circle. The Old Man and his party retreated to a distance worlds away. He had shown them, he had! He had shown the deucer, too, for all that he was dead as a one-eyed kipper! He spoke, and his voice was cracked and hoarse.

"Look!" he croaked, and smote himself once more upon the chest. "I'm not a blarsted coolie, I ain't. I'm a —— white man—that's wot I am!"

And no one disputed him.

Mr. Barker, late of Liverpool and the S. S. *Tyndareus*, would have fallen, but for a dozen eager arms outstretched to save his over-weary frame.

IV

"WHAT'S to be done with this fellow, Mr. McMaster?"

The Old Man sat on the edge of a bunk wherein reposed the much bandaged form of Mr. Barker, as the *Paladin* surged her way from Port Sudan toward Suez.

"Now poor Kearney's gone and there's a step up all round we'll need a new fourth. Do you think our fire-eating friend here——"

He stopped, smiling, and turned to the patient.

"What do you say, Barker? It's up to you, really."

"Wot's that, sir?"

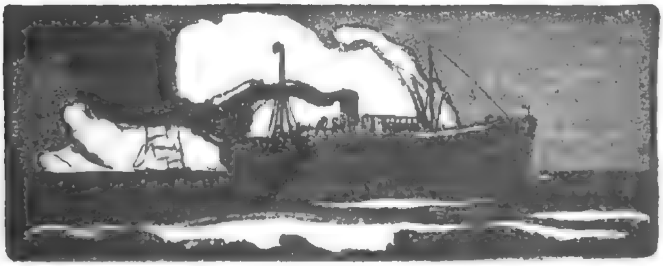
"Why, what would you have us do for you? What do you wish for most?"

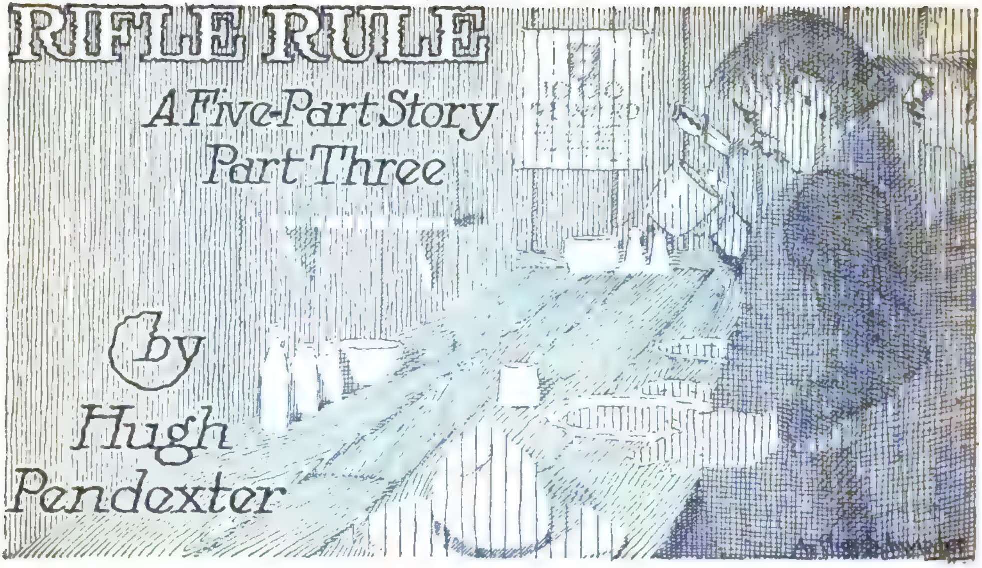
"Can I say out me wish, sir?"

"Of course you may. Now then—speak up! Eh?"

The unhandsome eyes of the stowaway sought the blue sky through the open port. Into them crept a dreamier, more peaceful light. Hope, long suppressed, awoke in his grimy breast and a soft, anticipatory smile played about the corners of his hard lips. He heaved a deep, wistful sigh. The Old Man bent his head to listen.

"Well, sir—if it ain't arskin' *too* much—I'd like a good tot o' rum, sir, so I would," said Mr. Barker gently.





RIFLE RULE

A Five-Part Story Part Three

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Long Knives," "Old Misery," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

IN 1856 when Kansas was torn between the pro- and anti-slavery men, Hale Watt a young Southerner slipped quietly ashore from the river-boat *Pole Star* and with his horse continued his journey by unfrequented roads.

Toward nightfall his horse went lame and in searching for a place to buy another, he stumbled on a house filled with men, whom Watt at once identified as Border Ruffians—thieves and murderers who terrorized the country in the name of Law and Order.

Pretending not to notice their interest in his satchel filled with gold, Watt prepared for bed in an upper room. During the night he narrowly escaped death, and fled with a fresh horse leaving a dead man behind him. From then on the Southerner realized that "Crow" Agger and his gang would be on his trail.

Next day he took the steamer again and there met "Prairie" Palmer and Enoch Fair, a young Northerner, who, sadly bewildered by the hostile crowd, was being harried by a "Regulator."

With some difficulty Fair was rescued and a friendship sprang up between the Northerner and Southerner. Fair wanted to take up farm-land and with some reluctance Watt agreed to join him. The young Southerner evidently feared something, but his new friend was unwilling to question him.

Prairie Palmer left them on good land and pushed on to the West. Already this part of Kansas was getting too crowded for him.

One day at the nearest store Fair was held up by some of Agger's men who insisted he was riding a stolen horse. The fiery old store-keeper, who did not want his trade ruined, put the men to rout, and Fair rode back to Watt who pointed out more trouble. In a rough square made of four timbers on the land they thought was theirs, was a notice:

"This is Bud Peoples' claim, he'll shoot anny man what comes in a mile of it."

Soon after, a man appeared who claimed the land. After some reluctance he admitted that his name was Pelks. Fair showed him the notice, and when he still showed fight drove him off with an ax. The man left swearing vengeance.

"I'm afraid Pelks will come back with a gang," said Fair.

Next day the comrades started out to visit their neighbors, whom they found friendly, but apprehensive about a mysterious cabin farther on. Curious, the men decided to visit the place themselves. There they found an Indian woman who was very unfriendly. When they left Watt told his friend that he had discovered a hole in the rock against which the cabin was built, and masked by a false door. Both men suspected evil doings.

Soon after, they found a notice pinned to their own door warning them to leave in forty-eight hours, and signed "Cap. Hemp." Both men decided that Hemp and the man who lived in the mysterious cabin was the same person, and that he was connected with Pelks.

"We're in for a siege," said Watt. "Tonight we'll stand guard."

When the attack came the men were ready for it. The baffled howls of the mob outside told them that their bullets were taking effect. In the leader's voice Watt recognized Crow Agger, and knew the owner of the other cabin. They routed the attackers and, following their advantage soon after burned the mysterious cabin. Here they discovered a press for the making of counterfeit money, and destroyed it. Surprised by the gang, they fled, leaving Agger dead. Fair had been hurt in the blazing cabin and with difficulty Watt got him to the horses. The gang had been broken forever. Agger would no longer terrorize the country.

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CHAPTER VI

THE LAW PAYS A CALL

FOR several days the tragic events at the double cabin were foremost in the thoughts of the comrades. With the stimulus of excitement removed each recalled details of the terrible experience to rehearse until Watt tore at his long black hair and begged:

"Oh, let's try to forget it, Enoch. Forget part of it anyway. Thinking about it, and living it over and over is worse than the actual fighting. Every time I sleep I seem to see that doorway filled with green eyes and slavering jowls. I wake up just as they are pinning me down."

"I dreamed of the cabin burning," moodily retorted Fair. "Cabin blazing; just as a skeleton of timbers, and you and I stood there looking into it and watching Agger and the other two trying to get out."

"What a fool dream! Dead men running round!"

"It's all foolishness—your doorway full of green eyes. If it keeps up it'll be worse'n foolishness. What we need is hard work to clean it all out of our minds. Ever since we came back here we've done nothing but talk about it and dream about it. We've been sneaking through the timber with rifles and hand-guns, waiting for the survivors of the gang to come after us. Let's change all that and get to work on your cabin."

"What few that's left of that gang have scattered far by this time," muttered Watt, yet allowing his eyes to sweep the walnut growth. "If they only would come they'd be most welcome. It's the woman I'm scared of. When she returned and found—Ugh! It gives me the creeps to think how her Injun blood must have boiled."

"Now we're living it all over again," complained Fair. "We are doing just what we've been doing and what we said we wouldn't. Let's start now for your claim just as if nothing had happened."

Nevertheless they took their arms with them when they rode up the creek. Their progress with the second cabin was slow. Fair felled trees and chopped and trimmed them into suitable logs, and frequently paused to glance over his shoulder. Watt gave his time to patroling the western edge of the timber, always looking for horsemen to break over the top of the grassy landwave. That night, however, they experienced much benefit from their exertions, for after supper they were too weary to think or talk much. And for the first time since the fight at the ledge they slept the night through without encountering fantoms.

"I feel brand new," declared Watt as he threw off his blanket and ran for a dip in the creek. He finished his swim and was surprized that Fair had not joined him. It was not until he was leaving the water that Fair came limping down to the bank.

"You're lame," remarked Watt. "You had much the worst of it yesterday."

"A little stiff. It'll soon wear off."

But as he dropped his blankets and raised his arms and dived into the creek Watt exclaimed in dismay, and the moment the brown head came to the surface he was angrily commanding:

"Come in here and let's look at that arm. Looks to be badly swollen."

"It's nothing," replied Fair as he swam about and favored the wounded arm. Watt persisted and at last Fair came ashore and exhibited the wounds left by the dog's teeth. The upper arm was inflamed and noticeably swollen.

"I rubbed it with bacon fat to soften it up. Feels a little tight, "Fair informed him.

"No work today. You must have a doctor. We'll ride to Topeka."

Fair vigorously objected, but Watt remained firm and vowed he would go and bring a doctor to the creek if his friend persisted in his stubbornness. So Fair surrendered, and after caching their extra firearms they mounted and started for town. Had each frankly voiced his feelings he would have admitted he was glad to be leaving the creek for a while. Truth was, both needed the trip to town in order to break their mental contact with the bloody adventure at the ledge. Fair suffered but little pain from his arm but did find it clumsy to move. They improved in spirits and were quite merry by the time they reached the little store on the Riley road and dismounted for lunch while their horses rested and grazed.

The old man met them at the door, his thin lips tightly pursed, his spectacles riding perilously low on the tip of his nose. He returned their hearty greetings with several curt nods.

"We've come to trade for grub," informed Watt.

"Don't know as I've got any food strong enough for two young —— cats," grumbled the storekeeper as he shuffled back behind the short counter. "You'll have to fetch me a lively parcel of trade before you make up for what you've killed off."

"You must have been hearing things," remarked Fair, studying the deeply lined face sharply.

"Women always talk. Even if they're part Injun they'll talk. Men are keeping their mouths shut, just waiting for a chance to get even. But the woman talks— Well, well. I s'pose Hemp lived according to his lights, even if they was mighty dim ones. Still he was a rare customer. Cash on the nail and never a word about prices. I figger that you two have cut my season's profits down at least a fourth."

"Agger's woman has been here then?" remarked Watt. "When? And where did she go from here?"

"*A* woman was here the day after she found her home burned over the bones of her man. I ain't called any names," shortly replied the storekeeper as he broke eggs into a frying-pan and added thick slices of ham. "These eggs come from the Potawatomi reserve town of St. Mary's Mission. Hemp used to take all I could get. But that trade's dead."

"Crow Agger, or Hemp, as you call him, is the deadest thing in Kansas," snapped Watt. "We went to recover a horse and a saddle. We came near being chewed up in the cabin before we could kill off his dogs. We found his press for making bogus money and smashed it. The gang jumped us before we could get clear of the place. We not only did for Agger, but also for Bodge and Pelks, and a fellow called Joey. We wounded some of the others. Now you know all about it and it's time to turn that ham."

The storekeeper slowly removed his spectacles so he might scrutinize them the more closely, and softly cried:

"It beats ——! Three of the men, more or less bunged up, come in hot-foot. They didn't say much, and what they did tell was different from your talk. Said they was shot at in the dark while they was riding home. Said you folks poisoned the dogs while they was away. I was sorry to lose their trade, but I didn't blame you two for shooting from cover. Looked on it as a sort of a feud with the odds against you. But to enter that cabin! And to think it was Hemp who was turning loose that bad money! As a trader I'm glad that game is busted up."

Then with a tinge of scepticism—

"Where was the woman while you two was carrying on?"

"We saw her ride away, leaving the dogs to guard the place. Don't know where she went. We went in and had a fight with the dogs and killed them, five of them."

"They was powerful critters. That sounds kind of tall. Sure you didn't shoot 'em through the winder?"

Fair stripped up his shirt sleeve and disclosed the double line of tooth marks, and queried—

"Does that look like poison or shooting?"

"By hickory! You did get to close quarters! And that arm looks mortal bad. You get to a doctor and have it fixed at once," cried the storekeeper. "Oh, I knew you two young ——s were following a hot trail when you fooled Joey into believing you was mizzling for Topeka and then turned about and rode after him. I'm a trader. Southern money, Free-State money, Regulator money, army-post money—all of it's the same to me. I'm here to sell goods. But seeing as how Hemp won't trade here any more I'm keen to hear the whole story if you feel free to talk."

Fair grimaced, disliking to reopen the subject; but Watt willingly obliged, and for half an hour piled climax on climax with the storekeeper gripping the edge of the counter and listening with his mouth gaping. When the recital was brought to a close he exclaimed:

"By Gineral Jackson! If it could have happened fifty years ago I would a honed to be in your boots. I'm all over feeling a little sour because a parcel of prime cash trade was cut off. The rest of the gang won't go near you again until they've joined up with another leader. Then look out. But you want to watch out for the Cherokee woman every minute. Already she's been making medicine against you two."

"We can't fight a woman," mumbled Watt, and glancing uneasily from the window.

"I don't think she's figgered to get you with knife or gun. She didn't have any weapons in sight when she was here. But she's up to some game."

"If she wanted to charge us with any

crime she's had time to make Topeka and return with a sheriff long before this," said Fair.

"She was on the way to town when she stopped here. But whatever she does she'll do in an Injun way. She'll do it in the last way you'd ever think of. She as much as said she had a trap set for you."

"Her home is burned. She'll be going back to Indian Territory," hopefully suggested Watt.

The storekeeper shook his head.

"Not for a while. She's going to take up with a band of Potawatomi breeds. She figgers on rebuilding the cabins and staying in the territory. Says she's going to run a horse-ranch. Probably will stock it with horses the breeds steal."

In a sober mood the comrades finished their meal and returned to their horses. Fair was the first to mount and enter the road. As Watt thrust his toe into the stirrup the storekeeper placed a hand on his shoulder and softly said:

"Didn't tell your friend, but the Cherokee woman in her talk seemed to be r'iled against the Yankee more'n against you. It's him she's after most particular."

"She can't go after him without going after me," grunted Watt.

"So it would seem. But that's her talk. Better keep close to him."

"Thanks," growled Watt, swinging into the saddle. "She'll have to get me first."

He would have spurred after Fair, who was now impatiently waiting down the road had not the storekeeper clutched his arm and requested:

"Just a minute. I couldn't say it before your friend. It's for you to tell if you want it known. Mighty few words are enough for the wise man. Some one from Lexington has been asking for you."

Watt was ready enough now to listen. Waving his hand for Fair to be patient for a bit longer he demanded—

"Who was he?" And his face grew hard.

"I didn't see him. He was in Topeka a few days ago, nosing round among the wagon-trains. I take it he's a sheriff from Missouri. He's working in single harness as he wa'n't keen to ask help from Sheriff Jones, or from the United States marshal. One of the out-bound traders was telling me about it when he stopped in here for a drink. Says the Missouri man was mighty sly. He didn't give your name but told how you look. Described you to a '*t*'. He let on that there was a tidy sum of money waiting for the man who could put him on your trail. My friend, the trader, passed the word to me thinking I might turn an easy profit. But that sort of trade don't interest me. You know how much you're worth to a sheriff from Missouri. It must be a heap, as he ain't willing to take Jones or Marshal Donaldson in with him.

"Acts like he wants to hog all the reward money hisself. Doesn't let on he's a sheriff and seems to spend his time looking over the out-bound trains. Seems to think you'd be pulling out for Santa Fé. Now I've told you and you know your own business best about going to town."

Fair was now slowly riding back toward them, and Watt hurriedly said:

"Much obliged to you; but I must take my friend to a doctor as he won't go without me. He knows nothing about my affairs."

With that he cantered forward to Fair, and with a forced laugh explained:

"Old fellow is still worried over what the Cherokee woman may do. Hard to stop him when he gets talking."

The ride to Topeka was uneventful although they expected trouble with one small band of horsemen that looked as rough and desperate as any of Agger's followers. These riders stared at them sharply but did not offer to annoy them. Fair glanced at the strand of hemp that had reappeared in Watt's coat and wondered if that significant badge was their passport.

It was late evening before a doctor could be found at home, as calls for medical service were pouring in from a wide area, there being no political bias among the sick. The swollen arm was cleansed and bandaged. The physician was confident that the swelling would soon abate if Fair abstained from work for a few days. In better spirits the comrades hunted up an eating-house and had their supper and then repaired to the Commercial Headquarters Hotel, now practically completed. At first they were told there were no accomodations, but Watt insisted his friend must have shelter, as to sleep in the open air might seriously affect his wounded arm.

"We can't make room for every man who gets cut or shot in a brawl," coldly informed one of the two proprietors. And he gazed coldly at the badge of hemp.

Leaning over the short counter Watt whispered:

"He got it when he helped wipe out Captain Hemp and his crowd. You may have heard something about it."

With round eyes the landlord stared at Fair, then nodded his head and said:

"You two can have the room my wife and I were using. There's thirteen children in the two families running this place and our boarders take up all the room. But if you helped him tackle Hemp you must be all right, even if you do wear hemp in your buttonhole. You two were here for a bit earlier in the season. I thought I remembered you."

He conducted them to a room crowded with surplus furniture. Three cages of canaries hung from the ceiling. Besides the large French bedstead there were two Boston rockers, several mahogany squab chairs, several crickets, a large center table and a small wall table. On the tables were piled family portraits, grim, furrowed faces of early New England pioneers. It was with difficulty the guests could make their way across the room. A printing-office on the second floor was running in full blast. Boarders came and went and called up and down the stairs. Throughout the building romped and quarreled the baker's dozen of youngsters.

"You go to bed, Enoch, while I look the town over," advised Watt. "You need the rest. I'll be back soon."

"Doesn't sound much like rest," dolefully answered Fair as he ducked under a cage and maneuvered toward the big bedstead. "You'll keep your ears open for news of our fight with the gang?"

"And look for signs of the Cherokee woman. We can start back early as the doctor said it would be all right for you to travel."

Fair was agreeably surprized. He had expected Watt to insist on remaining in town for several days. Watt returned shortly before midnight and after making a light sat down on the edge of the bed and aroused Fair. His first words were:

"The Cherokee woman has stirred up something here. Sheriff Jones is in town and I'm afraid he's looking for us."

"They can't hold us for fighting those ——s!" cried Fair, now thoroughly awake.

"I'm afraid they can do anything they want to. Still I have the notion they won't make that the charge if they bother us. The storekeeper you traded with, one of your Yankee brethren, dropped a few words. He didn't dare to talk right out in meeting, or else he doesn't know just what is brewing. The substance of his words is, 'Mizzle!' "

"I'll be glad to start back in the morning; but I'll see the storekeeper first. I must know what we're running away from. It must be the fight with Aggers' gang. There isn't anything else they can bring against us."

Watt had nothing to say although he could have said he feared the breed woman's trap was planned exclusively for his friend.

* * *

IN THE morning Fair found his arm was no worse and even insisted it was better. They ate their breakfast in the hotel and procuring their horses from the livery-stable went in search of the friendly storekeeper. Although the hour was early the town was alive with the bustle of building. Several long wagon-trains were congesting the main street. Smaller trains were bringing supplies and household goods from Leavenworth and Kansas City; and there was a rare confusion around these local freighters as eager settlers swarmed about each in the hope of finding their property. Some of these wagons had been looted along the road by the wandering bands of toll-takers. One citizen won a reputation for great shrewdness when it was learned that he had hired a Government wagon train to bring along a wagon filled with personal property. It required more courage than the average gang of desperadoes possessed to hold up a Government outfit.

The storekeeper was much perturbed on beholding his callers, and he lost no time in taking them to the rear of the long room on the pretense of showing them some axes.

"I was hoping you were out of town," he muttered to Fair. "Go away at once."

"We're going at once; but we want to know what we're running from. If it's because we had a fight with Agger's gang and had to kill him and three of his men we want to know that."

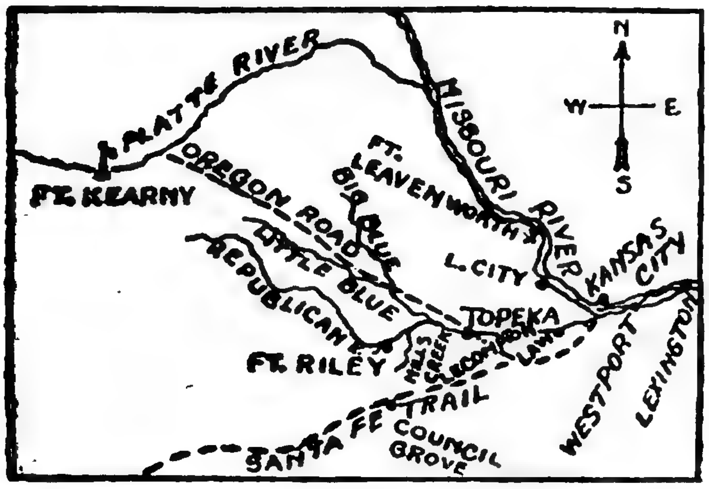
The merchant's face widened with a quick smile.

"So it's true, eh?" he whispered proffering another ax for inspection. "We heard rumors about it, but it seemed too good to be true."

Then his lean face grew grave and he added:

"It isn't for that. The fight may be the cause of whatever Jones is planning to play on you, but Agger—or Hemp, as we always called him—was too notorious for his slayer to be brought to book. He was too impartial; he robbed both sides."

"If Sheriff Jones really wants to find something interesting he should ride out to the cave back of the burnt cabins and look at the outfit Agger used in making his bogus money," wrathfully suggested Fair. "You can't tell us anything more definite than you've told my friend here?"



"I can't. I'm sorry. We folks here know he's planning to do something, but we don't know what. So I advise you to ride away as fast as possible. We don't believe he'll travel as far as your claim to bother you. He'll wait to catch you when you come to town. He likes Lecompton and its dives too well to wander very far."

Thanking him and returning to the street they rode through the maze of congested wagons and out on the hilly road. Fair was beholding the notorious Sheriff Jones in every armed man he saw, while Watt was on the lookout not only for Jones but also for the sheriff from Missouri.

Without hindrance they made the little store, and found the old man busy with the trade of a small wagon-train just in from the plains. They were much interested to learn that slashes and punctures in the soiled canvas tops had been made by Kiowa arrows on the North Fork of the Canadian. These grim assurances of the red man's hostility thrilled the comrades with much the same emotion.

Fair forgot his wounded arm in staring at the arrow-holes and in listening to a terse account of the fight. Watt's dark eyes sparkled enviously as a beardless youth patted a long muzzle-loading Kentucky rifle and in a drawling voice "cal'lated" he had wiped out one of the enemy. The owner of the train was eighty years old. His tall figure was bowed at the shoulders, but his eyes were those of a hawk. Back East he would have been retired to a chimney corner with slippers on his ancient feet in place of moccasins. In the plains' trade he was a man's man yet, all the more indomitable and trustworthy because of his vast experience; and he would so continue to be until Taos whisky, bullet or arrow, snapped the thread abruptly.

He was Reuben Morse and his people had settled in the New Hampshire grants prior to the Revolutionary War. He was a sturdy boy, doing a man's work, when his father returned at the close of the war. Then like other New England lads, fired by the love of adventure, he had started for Salem, where he intended to take ship and seek his fortune on the blue water. Fate shifted his plans and sent him to the Mississippi Basin; and with several generations of seafaring men behind him he had never seen the ocean since coming West, unless a glimpse of the Gulf, after fighting under Jackson at New Orleans, be the exception.

He was rather non-commital at first but gradually reacted to the young men's enthusiastic interest, and concluded several reminiscences by inviting them to eat dinner with him. During the meal the comrades looked with heightened respect on the drawling youth once Morse happened to remark that the beardless one's forebears were friends and hunting-companions of Boone and Simon Kenton. Had Morse not been impatient to make Leavenworth and outfit for a return trip while the grass was good, the comrades gladly would have spent the day listening to the stirring recitals. In parting he told them:

"If you two younkers want to make a trip with old Reuben he'll be glad to take you along. Can meet me here or at Topeka about three weeks from today. We're making the most of the season."

After they had thanked him and were saddling their horses the storekeeper came to them and hurriedly explained:

"First chance to get you two alone. —— to pay along of what you young —— cats did to Hemp and his crowd. Word's been passed sorter quiet to other Regulators, and it'll be s'prizing if you ain't paid a call that you'll never pay back. If I was you two I'd hook up with old Morse and keep clear of Mill Crick. You can go right through to Leavenworth with Morse and there won't no one try to snake you out of his train-crew. Then you can sneak up the river and make Nebraska, or turn back with him and go to Sante Fé."

This warning in a degree helped to dispel the young men's regrets over parting from Morse and his fascinating tales. Especially was Watt reconciled to returning to the claims now there was a prospect of danger. He said—

"If we can't stand off the Kiowas we can find excitement in fighting white skunks."

Fair was fired by a dogged determination to protect his property.

"I might be willing to quit the creek for a season if they'd stop crowding me," he told Watt as they rode home, "but I'll die before they can drive me off."

"Let 'em come! The sooner the better! We've got our fighting fists all doubled up," was the jubilant reply.

SWINGING from the road to the creek path they completed their journey with great caution. The fringe of timber was almost continuous and afforded many excellent opportunities for an ambush. No foe was lying in wait for them, however; and they arrived at the cabin after dark. They did not venture to build a fire until they had scouted well up the creek. Making their supper of cold ham and beef they decided as a further precaution to sleep outside the cabin. The night passed quietly. After breakfast both felt a disinclination for routine labor. They had quaffed of turbulent waters, and routine affairs seemed dull and uninteresting.

"Your cabin must be finished," declared Fair. "Any more of those Injun yarns and I'll be living in a wigwam."

Watt regretfully confessed he knew of no reason why they should not complete the cabin, yet before they could drive themselves to the task they needs must make a long scout up the creek and look for enemy signs. Naturally they swung one side long enough to call at the Emery cabin. Emery was not at home. His wife met them with a frightened face and did not ask them to 'light and enter. They paused only long enough to exchange greetings.

As they rode away Fair remarked:

"That woman was both sorry and scared to see us. We won't go there again."

"She was scared. You could see it in her face," agreed Watt. "Her sympathies are with the Cherokee woman, who's been kind to her children and has given her gay dresses. Well, we can't count on having the use of the old man's hay-cutter. Going to try the Daggets?"

"We might as well learn how we stand with the rest of our neighbors," said Fair.

The Daggets were cordial in the bearing and yet in a nervous flutter which they could not conceal. Daggets' eyes glistened brightly as he took over the conversation and held it to ordinary lines. Mrs. Dagget stared at them strangely while her husband rambled on about crops and stock-raising and ignored politics and desperadoes. When they rose to go she insisted on their drinking heartily of cold milk. Dagget crowded by his wife at the door and for a second seized their hands and without a word gave them a mighty squeeze.

"Those people are tickled blue to know the gang is broken up, and yet they're afraid to say as much," observed Watt. "It'll be a long time before they dare mention Agger's name. The way they kept off the subject shows they know all that's happened."

On the following day they resumed work on Watt's cabin. Their progress was slow as the fear of a hostile visitation was ever upon them. Yet nothing to alarm them happened while they finished the walls, built up the end peaks and secured the ridge-pole in place. They finished with the ridge-pole just before the noon hour and had eaten their dinner and were taking a little time off for a smoke when several horsemen came riding up the creek path. They came openly and without haste.

Fair remained motionless, staring at the newcomers. Watt made a dive for his rifle and instantly was covered by several shotguns.

"Keep away from that gun!" warned the leader, "or we'll riddle you with buckshot."

"Quiet, Hale. They're not Regulators," said Fair.

"No, siree! We're not Regulators. I'm Sheriff Jones of Douglas County and these men are my deputies. No use to try any tricks. I bear a charmed life. No bullet can more'n crease my tough hide. Git on your horses and ride ahead of us back to that other cabin."

"What are we arrested for?" demanded Watt, his manner betraying some reckless purpose.

"You won't be arrested for nothing that I know of if you keep your paws off your guns."

"But what have I done?" demanded Fair, much agitated; for his upbringing influenced him to eye even these rough vassals of the law with a certain amount of awe.

"We don't know as we want you yet," calmed the sheriff. "When we find out that you oughter be arrested we'll let you know. Just now you're to ride back to that other cabin while we look into your affairs a bit."

Completely mystified the comrades mounted and led the way down the creek. Not a word had been said about the fight at the double-cabin, and, according to the sheriff, there was as yet no reason why they should be taken into custody.

"What has the cabin got to do with it?" asked Fair in a whisper as Watt crowded in by his side.

Watt shook his head.

"Some game. Underhanded, I'm afraid. Make them show a warrant if they try to arrest you."

Jones was a man a little over thirty years of age. His six feet of height was accentuated by his rather slender build. His face was cadaverous and his features were irregular. His small, dull eyes were constantly roving about as if fearing an ambush and seldom would meet the gaze of the man with whom he might be talking. He spoke in broken sentences and used many oaths. He had done as much as any one individual to keep factional differences alive in Kansas; but he was never in the van at times of dangers unless he was taken by surprize.

In silence the sheriff and his deputies dismounted and motioned for Watt and Fair to do likewise. Then addressing Fair he said—

"Your name is Fair?"

The name was acknowledged. The sheriff next asked—

"Whose shack is this?"

"Mine," replied Fair, vaguely scenting trouble for his friend if he admitted him to ownership.

"That's all I want to know. Watch 'em." This to the deputies. "One man's job inside. I'll do it."

"If you'll tell me what you're looking for I can help you," offered Fair.

The sheriff grinned sardonically, his gaze wandering from side to side but avoiding Fair's steady eyes.

"You, young feller with the black hair. Step to the door. Don't come inside. Just watch me. I want a witness to anything I may find."

"Look out you don't walk into a bear-trap, or a spring-gun," jeered Watt.

The sheriff jumped back in alarm. Fair spoke up and assured him—

"There are no traps, nor spring-guns."

The sheriff cast a malevolent glance at Watts' boots and growled:

"You look out you don't walk into a noose, young feller. You're spoken of as being sound on the goose, but by —— you'll look up a rope if you're caught going ag'in law and order."

With this warning he gingerly entered the cabin. Watt watched him in quiet amusement as he pawed over their few belongings. Fair regained his composure, for he knew there was nothing in the cabin that could bring him into conflict with the law; and the laws of the territory would have excited the envious admiration of a Draco.

"He hasn't found anything incriminating yet, Enoch, except that smoked ham," Watt called over his shoulder. "Ah, but now he's getting warm! He's hefting the bag of flour!"

An explosion of oaths in the cabin was followed by the harsh command:

"You keep your eyes on me, young feller. You'll have to swear in a court of justice to what I find."

"He's throwing our fireplace wood all over the cabin," called out Watt. "Look out for snakes!"

The sheriff gave a cry, but it was one of triumph. The next moment, much to Watt's amazement he was pouncing upon a book. Flourishing this above his head he ran to the door and held it up before the prisoner and the deputies.

"I've nailed the —— young traitor! I've nailed him, by ——!" he shouted as he held the volume before him so all might see it. "Found this hid under his woodpile."

"A book!" muttered Watt, striding forward. "We had no books. Not a book. What is it?"

"What is it?" taunted the sheriff. "It's enough to put a noose round that —— young abolitionist's neck. That's what it is. All of you take a squint at that. Notice how the cover is stained yaller and brown. Been where the rain leaked down on it. I want you all to be able to 'dentify it again."

And he passed the damnatory evidence under the gaze of the deputies, of the astounded Watt and the prisoner. On the cover was printed UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

Fair blinked his eyes. He was doubly amazed. He could not understand how the book came to be in the cabin, nor why there should be any commotion because it was there.

"It isn't my book. I never brought it here. But what if I had? Any law against it?"

The sheriff's shifty eyes gloated over the title for a moment and his mouth twisted in a smile as he mocked:

"What of it? He asks what of it? The —— young hypercrit! We'll try to let some light into your Yankee head."

And he pulled from his pocket a copy of the territorial laws, and thumbed the pages to Chapter CLI, and followed his finger down to Section 3; and in a singsong voice read aloud:

> If any free person shall by speaking, writing or printing, advise, persuade or induce, any slaves to rebel, conspire against or murder any citizen of this territory, or shall bring into, print, write, publish or circulate, or cause to be brought into, printed, written, published or circulated, or shall knowingly aid or assist in the bringing into, printing, writing, publishing or circulating, in this territory, any book, paper, magazine, pamphlet or circular, for the purpose of exciting insurrection, rebellion, revolt or conspiracy on the part of the slaves, free negroes, or mulattoes, against the citizens of the territory or of any part of them, such person shall be guilty of felony and shall suffer death.

"Good heavens!" faintly exclaimed Fair when he could find his voice. "Even if that book was mine, which it ain't, do you mean to say it would be enough to send me to the gallows?"

"Not a —— bit of doubt about it," replied the sheriff. "You've heard the law."

"Then God help Kansas! For if what you've read is the law then every man with a copy of the Declaration of Independence in his home would be liable to be hung."

"You can make your talk before the judge at Lecompton. I take the law as I find her. Kansas law is plenty good enough for Sam Jones. Climb on that horse and ride ahead."

"This is atrocious!" fiercely denounced Watt.

"You keep your mouth shut, or I'll tote you along for trying to block the workings of the law," warned the sheriff.

"This is an outrage," persisted Watt. "How did you know that book was in our cabin? We didn't know it was there."

"That'll all come out at the proper time."

"Queer you should be scared to tell," jeered Watt. "How do we know you didn't hide it in the cabin before riding up the creek to where we were working?"

"Don't you dare try any game like that on Sam Jones," roared the sheriff.

"I'll get to the bottom of this beastly business," was the hot retort. "Before you're through with it you'll change your tune. I happen to have friends who are listened to when they speak. You'd be glad to hold their hats while they talk."

His bold assurance made an impression on the sheriff and his deputies. They knew he was of Southern birth and was liberally supplied with money. He had been observed in Leavenworth and Topeka, and more than one partisan band had allowed Fair to pass unchallenged because he was in the company of the Southerner. And Watt could not conceal the natural arrogance of his class when his temper was aroused.

"I'm doing my duty," mumbled the sheriff. "But seeing as you make such a hullabloo about it, and as it'll all come out at the hearing, I'll say we learned about this —— book from a woman."

"The Cherokee breed!" cried Watt. "Crow Agger's woman. She came here and hid the book to hurt my friend. Agger got the book along with some other loot. Be sure you have her in court to explain how she knew it was here; for she never called at the cabin while we were at home."

"She'll be on hand," growled Jones. "One of my men is after her now."

"And I'll wager five hundred dollars against the nag you're riding she is not present unless captured and brought in against her will."

"I'm doing my duty," growled the sheriff, his shifty gaze growing worried and darting everywhere except toward Watt. "If you can prove all you say in court it'll help your friend's chances 'mazingly."

"Take him to Topeka and we'll soon satisfy the court."

"The judge ain't fond of Topeka. This man goes to Lecompton, the cap'tal of this noble territory," replied the sheriff, still influenced by Watt's confident bearing.

"Folks say you're sound on the hemp."

"As sound as you are. I wish to talk with my friend alone."

The sheriff hesitated, then motioned for his men to fall back a few rods. Watt began:

"Don't you get worried over this —— nonsense, Enoch. The charge is absurd. The law is as he read it, but they'll never get the informer into court. If they bring her in by force she'll be unable to explain how she knew the book was there. Jones made his leap before he had looked."

"It's a wicked law!" gritted Fair. "Why, any man having a copy of the *Tribune*, or any other Northern paper, in his possession could be hung."

"You don't have to argue with me. I must now tell you something outside your affair. I would go with you to Topeka, but I don't dare go as far as Lecompton. There's a man from Missouri looking for me. The old storekeeper told me about him. He hasn't asked any help of Jones or the marshal. He hasn't given my name to any man in the territory so far as I know. But he has described me and is hunting for me. Enoch, I don't want to meet that man. I quit the boat at Lexington because there was another man, down in Mississippi, who was curious to find me."

"I knew you had had trouble of some sort, but I'll swear you weren't to blame," earnestly broke in Fair.

"Of course you'll believe in me, Old Sober Face; because you're a good fellow. I was, and I wasn't, to blame. This is what we must do: You go with them to Lecompton and I'll keep in the background and work for you through some one else."

"I should feel mighty bad if you mixed up in my troubles——"

"You mild sort of an idiot!" passionately interrupted Watt. "By ——! You're as much as saying I'm sneaking to cover to save my own hide. I'll go in and swear the book is mine."

"They would know you were lying. Don't get mad. Your first plan—working through another—is the only way to help me," soothed Fair.

Watt cooled down and resumed:

"I'll get some one to see the judge and do the talking. It must be fixed up when you go before him the first time, bail arranged and all that. Before the grand jury meets I'll have some of my Southern friends to send on word the whole matter is to be dropped. I'll let that jackass of a sheriff believe I'm staying behind to keep the claims from being jumped. Before you reach Topeka I believe I can have some one riding after you with a confidential talk for the judge. I think I know the man who will be glad to act."

"Ain't you two talked about enough?" suspiciously asked the sheriff.

"Just finished. I shall stay here and guard the cabin. Take good care of my friend as he won't be in custody long."

LECOMPTON, most inconveniently situated on a bend of the Kansas and several miles from any of the main roads, was an excellent example of a town built for speculative exploitation. An Indian "floating claim" was bought for a song by the promoters, who were powerful enough to induce the legislature to select the infant settlement as the territorial capital. Sheriff Jones had his residence there. There were a score or more houses, log and frame, when Fair rode into the town. The majority of the houses were used for drinking and gaming places of the lowest type, and were well patronized by horse-thieves, desperadoes and reckless adventurers.

Laborers and mechanics were being paid a dollar and a half to three dollars a day, and employment went begging. Out of two hundred able-bodied men in the town at least a hundred were devoting their time to carousing. These idlers, however, seemed to be well supplied with money. Fire-wood was worth four dollars, and hard to buy, although there was an abundance of it near the town. Sheriff Jones even found it difficult to hire men to guard the town at night against possible Free-State raids, although he offered two dollars per night.

Fair had a chance to observe the capitol building, on the construction of which the Congressional appropriation of fifty thousand dollars already had been expended or wasted. Only the foundations were in place, with some iron castings and tin cornices heaped near by. As the architect was to receive a compensation of four per cent. on the cost of the building it was expected that the total cost would be considerable. In fact, the contractors readily admitted that by the expenditure of two or three hundred thousand more dollars the building might be made ready for the roof.

Fair felt himself among the Philistines as he observed the groups of desperate-looking men who eyed him wolfishly, and at times demanded in loud voices to be told his offense. Contrary to his wont Jones was uncommunicative. Watt's final words were still in his ears and he was not yet sure it would be wise to parade his prisoner.

"Now you boys be good," the sheriff advised several men who crowded forward to halt the posse and ascertain the stranger's status. "Judge Lecompte won't like it if you try any funny business. If any of you get brash and ever come up for bail you'll be mighty keen for old Sam to go on your bond. This young feller is brought in for a hearing. Don't keep the court waiting."

Instead of taking Fair to the log structure that served as a jail Jones conducted him to the Viginia House and informed Dr. Brooke, the proprietor, that his charge would lodge there for the night. This tended to confine Fair's status to that of a suspicious person; and as the territory paid generously the landlord had no objection.

Fair would have preferred a strongly barred room, with his meals served in solitude. But Jones, although impressed by Watt's veiled hints about his powerful friends, and despite his desire to steer a safe course, could not resist the temptation to exhibit his prisoner. The hotel, however, was much safer than the street for such a display of vanity. The sheriff never could restrain his impulse to boast of his hair-breadth escapes. He was constantly impelled to dramatize his hardihood in many a fictitious climax. Braggart and coward he responded to his cheap egotism whenever he believed himself to be safe; and this night, in opposition to Fair's objections, he took the young man into the public dining-room.

All eyes were directed toward the two men. Remarks of an uncomplimentary nature were loudly made. Fair was nervous and apprehensive, and seldom raised his gaze from his plate. He could eat but little as he waited for the ordeal to end. By degrees the diners returned their attention to their food, and Fair felt more at ease. Near the end of the meal the sheriff rose and arrogantly announced:

"I want to find you here when I come back. It'll be mighty unhealthy for any man to try to git away from me. Yes, sir! I've been shot more times than any man in the territory; knifed, too. I've got the scars to prove it. But here I am, Sam Jones, alive and kicking, and a bad customer to git r'iled up. I'm going to be gone a minute or two, and you squat right here till I come back."

With this warning he strode through the room, his belt of weapons clanking at every step, and disappeared in the bar. Fair was much perturbed. While he did not have a high opinion of the sheriff's caliber as fighting man, he had been brought up to respect the office and to consider it a shield. Soon after Jones left the room a shaggy-headed fellow, showing the influence of repeated drams, left his place down the room and lurched up to Fair's table and rested a booted foot on the sheriff's chair. For half a moment he glared viciously at Fair; then pulled a four-pound Dragoon revolver from his belt and with a hand that was a bit unsteady aimed the nine-inch barrel at the young man's head. Then he harshly said:

"I ain't had b'ar meat to eat for a coon's age. When I can't git b'ar meat I git humans. I'm Sherrard. Bill Sherrard."

He paused for the full force of his announcement to sink in. Fair remained motionless, his blue eyes staring into the muzzle of the huge revolver. Sherrard glared about the room and gave his violent temper loose rein. He had had no definite purpose when approaching the young man; but as the room was now silent and attentive he believed that something of a decisive nature was expected of him. Steadying his revolver he continued:

"You're a —— Yankee sneak. Tell me I'm a liar and them's your last words."

Fair discreetly kept silent under the abuse. Wrinkling his heavy brows the bully decided there must be no weak climax; and he commanded:

"You git out of that chair and hoof it for the door. I'll give you till your hand touches the door."

There was a mad scrambling aside on the part of the patrons between the threatened man and the exit. Fair did not move. Sherrard slumped into the vacant chair and steadied his gun by resting his elbow on the table. He repeated his command. Fair refused to move.

The two men thus confronted each other, the blue eyes of the victim never shifting from the angry orbs of the bully. Some of the men who had withdrawn from range began tiptoeing to the bar. Fair saw this much from the corner of his eye and did not know whether to rejoice, or to fear because of the withdrawal; for he knew they were gone to call the sheriff, and he could not foretell the result should Jones enter the room. But the minutes passed and the sheriff did not appear. The room was very quiet now; those who remained being intent on watching the conclusion of the tragedy. At last there came the sound of heavy steps behind Fair. The young man did not move his head. The tread was slow and deliberate and suggested an assurance Fair could not believe that the sheriff possessed. He was conscious of some one standing at his right and a bit back of him. Then a heavy voice demanded:

"What does this mean, Bill? This man was sent for by Judge Lecompte. Bad business for you to interfere."

"It may be bad business, but not for Bill Sherrard," promptly replied the bully, shifting his gaze to the intruder and unconsciously allowing the muzzle of the gun to droop.

The newcomer rested his hands on the end of the table and quietly continued:

"This man is in the sheriff's care. You mustn't bother him. You go back to your table and finish your supper. If you're already through you'd better join the boys in the barroom."

Sherrard, now little better than a madman, pushed back his chair and with his free hand hurled the sheriff's plate at the head of his adviser. The latter darted a hand forward and wrenched the heavy gun loose, and the next moment the two men were grappling in the narrow aisle. Not until then did Fair venture to glance at his rescuer. He was Dr. Brooke, the proprietor. The fight was terrific while it lasted, but Sherrard appeared to be receiving all the punishment. Brooke was practically unmarked as Sherrard crashed to the floor for the last time. The latter's face was shockingly battered and swollen. Not until Sherrard had retreated to the street did Jones appear.

He pretended that the landlord's forceful explanation was his first intimation that the prisoner had been in danger. Next he endeavored to belittle the danger, and insisted that Sherrard was merely being "playful" and would not have harmed the young man.

"You take him out of here before he gets killed," puffed the landlord. "Sherrard is crazy enough when he hasn't had nary a drink. As he is tonight, he's a lunatic."

Fair hoped he would now be conducted to a room and permitted to enjoy his own company. But the sheriff's visit to the bar had increased his blatant egotism; and he loudly proclaimed—

"We'll see if Sam Jones can't take a man anywhere in this town without getting him killed."

And to prove his words he led Fair down the street to Jack Thompson's restaurant. Thompson was a member of the State legislature and his one-story frame building was well patronized. The restaurant, proper, occupied one of the three rooms, and the tables at night were converted into beds by the simple process of removing the supper dishes. The bar was in the second room and was doing a rushing business when Jones and Fair entered; for Thompson sold an alleged whisky at ten cents a glass, probably as poisonous stuff as one could buy between the mouth of the Missouri and Sante Fé. A drink or two of the vile concoction so dulled one's perceptions that scant notice was given the newcomers. Fair was agreeably surprized to attract so little attention.

Jones was too wise to satisfy his thirst at this oasis, and ordering his private bottle to be sent after him he called to two of his deputies and passed through to the rear room. This was given over to faro, draw-poker and other games. Here, also, Fair was unnoticed as the men were centering their attention on the various games. For the next four hours, although immune from annoyance, Fair was more uncomfortable than he had ever been in his life. Used to the clean prairie air, the fumes of liquor, the dense tobacco smoke, and the lack of ventilation made him ill. He was forced to remain by the sheriff's chair while that worthy won several hundred dollars at poker, and while he proceeded to lose his winnings and what was in his pocket at the faro-table.

It was after midnight when the sheriff was ready to leave the dive. All the way to the hotel he cursed his luck and blamed his losses to Fair's presence. By the time Fair was taken to his room he was fairly exhausted. He threw himself on to one of the two beds, and was asleep before the deputy sheriff, detailed to guard him, had removed his heavy boots.

He slept late next morning and was alone when he woke up. Hurriedly washing in the basin of water he stepped to the window and looked down on the mean street. Because of the town's isolation there was no color and bustle of passing wagon trains. Nor did there seem to be much street life of any sort, the greater number of the citizens, like himself, having slept far into the morning. His door was unlocked and he could have repaired to the barroom, only he was well content to be alone. Just before the noon hour Sheriff Jones burst into the room and harshly demanded to be told the whereabouts of the guard. After Fair had expressed his lack of knowledge the sheriff sullenly announced it was time to eat.

They were among the first in the dining-room and Fair was surprized to behold a creek neighbor, Mr. Dagget, seated in a far corner. After the first glance he decided Dagget did not care to be recognized. This hurt a bit, yet Fair could not blame the man, who was but little better than an invalid. He was finding himself in the same class with Dr. Robinson, who had advertised himself as being an unsafe man for any other man to be seen with.

The sheriff was in an ugly mood, yet aside from his surly temper did not treat his prisoner discourteously.

"Who'n —— is this young Watt?" he abruptly growled.

"He's young Watt," was the cautious reply.

"Thinks he's pretty uppity," sneered the sheriff. Then curiously— "Got lots of rich and powerful friends some folks seem to think."

"No question about that."

Jones half-turned and for a moment allowed his shifty eyes to meet Fair's gaze, and asked—

"Then why is he running round with you?"

"I like him. I don't know why he likes me. We went through a tough fight when we cleaned out the Agger gang."

Jones frowned and morosely lamented:

"I was mighty sorry about that. I'd planned to take one of my deputies and go out there and git the whole caboodle of them. You fellers dipping in made most of them scatter. Now it'll be hard work to find them."

"There's four of them who didn't scatter," mused Fair. "And there's the wreck of their bogus-money press in the cave in the ledge."

"I was waiting till I could make a clean sweep. You fellers spoiled it. Those who got away will be after your friend. After you if you git clear of this mess."

Dagget came down the room and halted at the sheriff's table long enough to announce—

"Judge Lecompte will hear my application for this young man to be admitted to bail at two o'clock this afternoon in his chamber."

"You just hold your hosses, mister. I don't know about this," pompously exclaimed the sheriff.

"It isn't necessary so long as Judge Lecompte made the arrangements for the hearing," replied Dagget indifferently as he turned away.

"He looks to me like a —— nigger-stealer!" wrathfully remarked the sheriff as the lawyer passed out of the room.

"My friend must have engaged him," muttered Fair, his hopes rising.

"Trouble with that friend of yours is he thinks he's too many punkins."

"He's a mighty good friend."

"Heard some bosh about his owning a big plantation."

"In Mississippi. It's not bosh."

"And still he travels round in double harness with *you!*" cried the exasperated officer, and shaking his head to show the combination was beyond his comprehension."

"Looks something like that," Fair admitted, and smiling for the first time since making Jones' acquaintance.

Impressed by Dagget's arrival on the scene and the knowledge the lawyer already had had an interview with Judge Lecompte, the chief justice of the territory and after whom Lecompton was named, nevertheless the sheriff was chagrined. He wanted to hold the center of the stage. He began to fear he had been ignored. He was in an ugly mood again when he made for the barroom. By the time he had taken one drink he was loudly talking for the benefit of the loungers. Then the landlord tapped him on the shoulder and informed him the judge was waiting for him to produce his man.

Hurriedly bolting a second glass of whisky

Jones conducted Fair to the room Judge Lecompte used when hearing matters in chambers. On entering the room they found Dagget, as well as the judge, waiting for them. In the chief justice Fair beheld a small, keen-eyed man, of light complexion and almost frail in physique. It was apparent to both the sheriff and the accused that Dagget and the court had been discussing the case. For after Fair's name and pedigree had been noted Judge Lecompte ruled:

"On motion of the counsel the charge as made in the writ is reduced to that described in Chapter 151, section eleven, of the statutes. Mr. Dagget, you desire to move the prisoner's discharge on bail?"

"I so move, if the court please," replied Dagget.

"I think I oughter be consulted first, judge," broke in the sheriff.

"That will do, sheriff. On the strength of the affidavit before me, submitted through counsel by one, Hale Watt, of Wattsville, Mississippi, the court will admit the prisoner to bail, pending the next term of the grand jury, in the sum of five hundred dollars; the surety to be ample and sound so that none of our Northern friends can accuse us of accepting straw-bail."

"Then he goes to jail, judge," declared Jones, who had signed bonds for more than one notorious villain.

Dagget produced a buckskin bag and began piling up twenty-dollar gold-pieces on the table before the judge.

"Your honor," he announced, "there is the amount of the bail in a surety that none can criticize your honor for accepting. I suggested to Mr. Watt that his signature on a bond would be perfectly satisfactory to this court, as he has a large estate behind him—as I already have informed your honor."

"The court would have been pleased to have accepted such a bond," promptly assured Lecompte. "Inform Mr. Watt that should he come to Lecompton I shall look forward to entertaining him. I regret he bothered to send the gold."

"He preferred it, as being the simplest way. Mr. Fair is now at liberty to go?"

"He is free to go."

Turning to Fair he harshly said:

"Young man, your political antecedents are disagreeable to this court. If not for the intercession in your behalf of a strong believer in Southern rights, a man of mark in the State of Mississippi, you would not be turned loose on so small a bond. He guarantees your innocence in this obnoxious matter. He declares you were active in destroying a foul nest of bandits. For all these reasons the court admits you to bail in this small sum. And yet I warn you to be very careful and not incur the displeasure of this court by associating with those fanatics, who are not satisfied with securing homes in this fair territory but are seeking to overthrow the sovereignty of the law. I warn you to keep apart from those outside meddlers, such as Lane, who have no honest business in this territory. And you will remember that until the grand jury has passed upon the evidence you are not clear of this charge, a conviction on which provides a minimum penalty of five years at hard labor. Sheriff, your prisoner is free to go."

Bewildered by the celerity with which his freedom had been granted Fair left the room followed by Dagget, the sheriff remaining behind to consult with Lecompte.

"I have your horse waiting for you outside in the street, if it hasn't been stolen," informed Dagget.

"You must have been confident of my release."

"The court showed no hesitation after he had read through the young man's affidavit. But not more talk till we're out of this place."

They mounted in front of the hotel and lost no time in leaving the town. After they were two miles on their way Dagget lessened his pace, and Fair asked—

"How could Hale fix it so easy?"

"By being willing to state in his affidavit certain facts which he preferred should not be known."

"I never nosed into his affairs. It's enough for me to know he's a mighty good friend. I'm sorry if he told anything he didn't want to tell."

"His talk to me was confidential. Of course I can't tell you anything that wasn't revealed at the hearing. You are shrewd enough to understand you would not have been released unless the court had been influenced by a Southern-rights man, a man with a powerful family behind him. There was nothing in his affidavit that any man might not be proud of. And yet his disclosures, as passed on by me to Lecompte, may embarrass him. In fact, I'm stating this much to you so you may urge him to leave the territory for a while."

"What have I done?" groaned Fair. "It would have been better if I had gone to jail and had taken my chances with the grand jury."

"You may think so now, but after you had been indicted and convicted, as I believe you would have been if not for Watt's efforts, you would have found life very terrible. The minimum sentence would be five years at hard labor. Your services would have been sold to any rascal who cared to purchase them for fifty cents a day, and you would have been at that rascal's mercy and made to work where he saw fit. I tell you frankly the court wouldn't have paid any attention to anything I attempted to say in your behalf unless I had been armed with the affidavit and certain papers he gave me to submit for the court's examination."

"And yet it may be necessary for him to leave the territory."

"For the simple reason his papers establishes him high in the court's esteem, and this information identifies him so positively and exactly that should any one come to Kansas seeking him there would be no trouble in locating him immediately. Lecompte is sure to talk about him, may urge some political office for him. He will feel proud to receive him socially. He is bound to be advertised widely. And all this resulting publicity will bring him to the attention of those, who, until now, might be seeking him blindly."

Fair recalled Watt's brief statement on the steam-packet, equivalent to a confession he had left the boat at Lexington to escape the consequences of a telegraph message. Fair knew his friend had left his home to escape from something. The telegraphic information, received by some Missouri sheriff, must have been meager. Now that the young man's whole history was in the possession of Judge Lecompte, who would be proud to give it out, the Missouri officer would soon know all about it and would have no trouble in filling the missing gaps.

"If my trouble is the means of driving Watt from the territory, then I shall go with him."

"And jump your bail?" quizzed Dagget with a faint smile.

Fair flushed hotly, but stoutly replied:

"In a second. Hale would expect me to do that. I can sometime pay back the five hundred dollars, but nothing would make up for five years lost out of my life. Another and more important thing; I'm afraid he wouldn't go unless I went with him."

"You are entirely right," assured the lawyer. "I can go so far as to say that the five hundred dollars will never come into his head again unless you bring it to his attention. Once I have carried out other instructions he has given me that bail-money won't mean any more to him than a price of a pair of shoes would to you."

CHAPTER VII

THE MEDICINE OF THE BEADS

WATT was waiting at Topeka when Fair and Dagget rode into town. Dagget was anxious to get back to his wife and announced his intention of pushing ahead and leaving the comrades to follow. When they came to part Fair thanked him for all he had done, but the lawyer insisted on keeping his service on a professional plane.

"I was well-paid by Mr. Watt. My first legal fee while in the territory. I would have been glad to help a neighbor, but so long as I have been paid you owe me nothing except your good will, and I know I already have that. I wouldn't stay around town overlong if I were you."

While the comrades were eating their dinner at the Commercial Headquarters Hotel Fair endeavored to express gratitude to Watt, but the latter refused to listen, and lightly remarked.

"Even if they had held and convicted you I should quickly have had you free."

And he paused to indulge in a chuckling laugh. He further explained:

"I was planning to buy your services, Old Sober Face. It would have cost me four bits a day and I would have made you do two dollars' worth of work. Almost sorry I missed that chance. You'd have to work with a ball and chain on your legs, as provided in the statutes. Wish I could have been there when that fellow pointed a gun at you! The landlord wouldn't have had any chance to pitch in."

"I can't thank any one for getting me out of that scrape. But it's better you weren't there. Dagget couldn't talk freely to me, and I don't want to meddle in your affairs; but he did say you ought to leave the territory for a while. I told him that if you went I should go with you. Your affidavit and papers impressed Judge Lecompte very strongly. Without them Dagget says the judge wouldn't have listened to him."

"Family influence stuff," moodily remarked Watt. "I knew it would work. Reckon Dagget is right in advising me to mizzle, but we won't take a long ride until we have to, Enoch. I'm convinced that any danger coming my way will pass through this town and I'll build my first defense here."

News of Fair's release on bail—an unusual indulgence for a free-state man to enjoy—had spread throughout the town by the time the comrades returned to the street. If there were those who glanced askance at Watt because of his political bias there was no denying the fact it was his influence that had kept the New England man from jail. When it came time to start for the creek Watt rode to the store where he had received a warning on a former visit.

"I'm building my first defense here," he told Fair. "It's for you to make the talk as he is a Yankee brother of yours. Take this gold-piece and arrange for him to send a messenger to your cabin if he hears of any one coming here in search of me. Chances are they'll ask for me by name after Lecompte has had time to talk."

Fair refused the twenty-dollar gold-piece and shortly said—

"That isn't necessary."

The storekeeper was soon at their service and shook Fair's hand warmly but did not refer to the subject of his congratulations. Fair briefly explained his business, and the storekeeper immediately agreed, saying:

"Glad to do it. When your friend helped you he helped all law-loving people. I know several young men who will be glad to take the ride and make it quick. They can be trusted and they'll keep their ears open and hear things before I do. Every one in town knows he kept you out of jail; and we don't care how he stands on the hemp. He'll get the word promptly."

Fair rejoined Watt and nodded to show the matter was arranged, and the two lost no time in riding from the town. As they jogged up the road Watt told how he had induced Dagget to wait on Judge Lecompte.

"He wasn't warm for it a bit; and I didn't blame him. Half-invalid he wasn't in position to invite possible trouble. But his wife is a trump. She took him aside and talked to him. She's the overseer on that plantation. After he had agreed to make the trip I gave him some papers, signed an affidavit, and he was glad to handle the matter. He didn't want to take a fee, and his wife said he shouldn't. But I convinced them it was best to keep the whole thing on a business keel instead of having it appear he was answering the call of any clan. Oh, hum. Wonder what will happen next? Probably my turn. And do you know, Enoch, I felt mighty lonesome and down in the mouth when we first hit that crick with nothing but frogs and coyotes and rattlers for company? Shows how cruelly one can misjudge a place. Even in Leavenworth or Lecompte we couldn't have found more excitement."

"You're more partial to excitement than I am," growled Fair.

They broke the journey at the little store and the old man was much pleased to see them. Word of Fair's release had preceded their coming through Dagget, and the storekeeper declared it was a mean trick for any one to hurt his trade by jailing one of his customers. Fair countered by reminding him of profits lost through Agger's death. The old man smiled grimly, and as he cooked their dinner he replied:

"Maybe yes and maybe no. Agger might have taken all my gold from me when he knew he was paying his last visit. Never thought of that till after he was dead. Maybe that's why he paid so free-like. Speaking of him reminds me that the Cherokee woman was in here yesterday. Seemed to be in fine spirits. Said she was going back to Indian Territory just as soon as her new medicine had worked. She 'lowed it was a mighty strong medicine. I'll be glad for you fellers when she's gone. If she'd stayed on the ledge and rebuilt the cabin she'd have cooked up some trouble for you."

"I'm thinking we're still in the woods," pessimistically replied Watt as he squared away at the prairie-chicken and bread. "And speaking of trouble, if you should hear any one asking for me, especially if he comes from Missouri, I'll be much obliged if you'll hustle word to me down the creek.

He laid a gold coin on the counter

which the old man brushed aside without seeming to see it.

"Glad you didn't try to pay me for a neighborly favor," he remarked. "When it comes to trade I expect my price. When it comes to being obliging it's a part of my religion."

Somewhat ashamed Watt pocketed his money and with a grin murmured to Fair—

"Makes two in one day who haven't that sort of a service to sell."

FAIR lifted his cup of coffee and was beginning to answer when a streak of steel flashed before his eyes, and a long knife was quivering in the wall beyond him. With a snarl of rage the old man pulled his revolver and aimed it at a figure in the doorway. Watt and Fair at the same time jumped back from the counter, and Watt pulled his pocket Colt.

"It's that woman!" gasped Fair.

Nor was the Cherokee to be frightened. With savage hate filling her dark eyes she held her ground, glaring at the three men. "Shoot!" she invited as she folded her arms. "I am not armed. There are three of you."

"You she ——!" spluttered the storekeeper. "What do you mean by heaving knives at my customers?"

She ignored the query and swept forward and halted within a few feet of Fair, and hissed:

"You get away from the sheriff? You'll not get away from Tlanuwa usdi (Little Hawk). You will travel far? But Tlanuwa usdi will be flying over your head as she flies over the wild pigeons, and strikes and kills and eats as she flies."

"See here!" angrily broke in Watt. "I told them to let this man go, and they did so. Now I'll tell them to put you in jail and they'll do so. You use your wings in flying out of this country mighty quick; for I'm sending word to the sheriff to lock you up."

His threat of jail killed some of the feral fire in her black eyes, and she fell back a step or two. Threats of death would have intimidated her none; but to be cooped up a prisoner within four walls would be a terrible fate to one who had lived as wild and free as the goshawk after whom she was named. Nor did she doubt his influence over the territorial officers; to the contrary she greatly magnified it. Her spies had reported to her that Fair had been arrested; and here he was at liberty because the Southerner had sent word for him to be released.

She darted by them and recovered the knife and thrust it in her girdle and walked to the door. But her hate must be served; and on reaching the threshold she wheeled about and warned:

"He must die. He killed the old man. He killed the dogs. He burned my cabin. He shall die."

"I killed the old man and the dogs, and burned the cabin," retorted Watt. "He shall not die until his time comes, when we all die."

"My medicine has not yet told me to kill you," she quietly replied. "But for him; listen!"

And in a passionate outburst and speaking in the ancient tongue of her people, and using the ritualistic speech of the *shamans*, she pronounced the sacred formula for destroying life, crying:

" 'Now I have come to step over your soul. You are of the white race. Your name is Fair. Your soul I have put at rest under the earth. I have come to cover you over with the black rock. I have come to cover you over with the black cloth. I have come to cover you over with the black slabs, never to reappear. Toward the black coffin in the upland of the Darkening Land your paths shall stretch out. So it shall be for you! The clay of the upland has come to cover you. Instantly the black clay has lodged there, where it is at rest at the black houses in the Darkening Land. With the black coffin and the black slabs I have come to cover you! Now your soul has faded away. It has become blue! When darkness comes your spirit shall grow less and dwindle away, never to reappear. Listen!' "

"What is she saying?" whispered Fair, sensing the force of the woman's wild anathema as she stood with head thrown back and eyes closed and her two outstretched hands pointing at him.

"All rot," muttered Watt.

He was uneasy; for he had not escaped the influence of voodooism as secretly practised by some of his plantation hands, nor forgotten the fearful tales of witchcraft whispered to him when a child by ancient servitors. One must breathe the atmosphere one lives in. Growth and education had taught him to laugh at youthful beliefs absorbed from dusky playmates, but what had impinged on his mind in the formative years rose at times to oust logic and to bother him.

"Here, you woman!" he cried. "Your curses are empty. They can hurt no one. Who is there that you can send to harm my friend? Crow Agger is dead and his gang is scattered. The wind sometimes roars and unroofs a cabin. Your words only make a noise."

She opened her eyes and stared for a moment as if not hearing him. Then the frenzy dropped from her, leaving her cold and insolent.

"The old man's men were cowards," she quietly confessed. "Do you think that cowards are chosen to work the medicine of the Cherokees? There is a black path before the feet of your friend. He will turn blue. It shall be so. Be careful you do not walk in that path. I tell you I have gone down to the water and placed the red bead on the red cloth, and the black bead on the black cloth."

And from her bosom she pulled out two beads of the colors named.

She held up the red bead between the thumb and first finger of the right hand, and the black bead between the fingers of the left.

"This is the ancient medicine of the Cherokees," she cried, thrusting forward the red bead. "And this black one is the white man. If the black is swift and cunning enough he will escape from the black path. But if the red bead is the quicker the white man will turn blue. Look!"

She faced the east and in a low impassioned voice implored *Sunikta Gigagei*, the Red Bead, to clothe her with the red garments of success. She reminded the Red Bead how she had gone to *Yunwi Gunahita*, The Long Person (river) and had performed all the sacred rites, even to burying a black bead and stamping the earth over it. Abruptly turning her attention to the Black Bead she addressed it in a loud voice and called down withering curses upon it.

And the two hands holding the beads jumped forward and upward, as if yanked into position by some powerful agency, and the arms became rigid; and the white men responded in varying degrees to the wild creature's spell. For behind Fair a few generations there had been the fear of witches, while the sailors in his race on many seas had believed some of the supernatural grotesquery that is absorbed by men who go down to ships. And there was the weird necromancy of Africa casting its shadow over the minds of Watt and the storekeeper. And as the three watched the woman's hands they saw the red bead moving slowly at first and from side to side with a serpentine motion between the thumb and index finger. Soon it accelerated its motion, and ran up and down, faster and furiously, shooting to the finger tips and back to the base of the thumb, without, so far as the staring watchers could detect any muscular stimulus on the part of the woman. The red bead was alive. When it finally ceased its motion the black bead commenced to move, and Fair watched it closely; for it was symbolizing his efforts to escape the black path. The bead crawled sluggishly, like a half-frozen snake, and could not seem to mount above the middle-joint of the first finger.

With a stamp of her foot and cry of triumph the woman hurled the black bead in Fair's face and exclaimed:

"Take your bead, white man. Your black path begins now. And you shall die in seven days!"

She was out the door and gone before either of the trio could speak.

With a shrug of his shoulders and an oath Watt cried:

"Now she's gone to set her killers on our trail. And they won't be white men. Perhaps you would have been safer, Enoch, if you'd gone to jail."

Fair sharply replied:

"I don't take any stock in such outrageous nonsense. If she's hired some one to kill me she need not to bother with all that mummery."

"It ain't that you believe it that puts you in danger," mumbled the storekeeper. "It's because she believes it and will risk anything to make the medicine work."

"She got her killers up from Injun Territory before she made her medicine," jeered Watt. "Well, if she bets on the red she'll lose. Enoch, let's be riding down the crick path."

"Keep your eyes open so it won't be a black path," warned the storekeeper. "I'll ask a few questions and see if I can learn of any of her people being brought up here. Wouldn't wonder if those Potawatomi breeds she was riding round with was used as her messengers. She could never get them to trail the men who did for Agger and his gang. Hope you have good luck."

The meeting with the Cherokee woman had disagreeably affected the young men more than either cared to admit. They talked but little as they rode to the cabin and when they did speak their conversation was forced. Each simulated a carefree bearing and both watched the timber sharply for likely places for ambushes. That night both were too ashamed to suggest they take turns standing watch, and as a result neither slept well. In the morning they took up their work on the second cabin. They chatted lightly over their midday meal, yet each knew he was dissimulating. At last Fair suddenly said—

"We know that woman's rigmarole was ridiculous, but we're both thinking about what she said."

"I'm only wondering how soon she'll set some of her friends on our trail," returned Watt; which was not the exact truth. "So far as her charms, and spells, and cussing go, we can laugh at her."

And as he spoke he was remembering an adventure of his boyhood, when he had spied on a black witch-doctor one night and with creepy flesh had listened to certain gibberish supposed to be an incantation, and how frightened he had been a few days later when a field-hand had suddenly died and it was whispered among the slaves the witch-doctor had slain him by sorcery. Long since he had decided the man had died of fright, or from poison, but there remained the child's abhorrence of all charms and spells.

That afternoon they began work on the rock-and-clay chimney, for the first time making use of the clay deposit. But at no time were they so absorbed in their work as to neglect keeping a sharp outlook for furtive figures stealing through the grove. In disgust Watt finally declared—

"We might as well be shot and done for as to keep up this fidgety watch while pretending we're not a bit nervous."

Fair agreed to this, and for the remainder of the afternoon they doggedly refrained from pausing every other minute to stare about for danger. Both felt the Cherokee woman's shackles had been thrown off as they rode back to Fair's cabin. Avoiding the subject they forced themselves to cook and eat their supper without displaying alarm every time a squirrel scampered through a tree. By the time they smoked their last pipe they were ready to turn in and sleep soundly.

WHEN Fair woke up next morning Watt lifted his head and with a grin said:

"Well; here we are in the land of the living. Nothing has happened. It's all in our minds."

"Out of our minds now. Race you to the creek."

Watt won the race, and they were in high spirits as they came back to the cabin and began preparing breakfast. A burst of nonsense on Watt's part, consisting of a burlesque of the woman's wild threats, was left unfinished as he glared at the cabin and demanded—

"When was that left there?"

Fair stared in the direction of the extended arm and saw some black marks on the peeled surface of a log.

"Made with soft coal or a stick from our outside fire," he muttered, rising and approaching the cabin. "What do they mean?"

"Seven marks. One has been crossed out," mused Watt. "When were they made?"

"She gave me seven days," muttered Fair. And he laughed mirthlessly. "And one day has gone. She, or one of her killers, must have been here while we slept."

"No. If one of her friends was here in the night he would have taken a shot at us," argued Watt. "A spy saw us leave here yesterday and while we were down at my cabin he sneaked up and made the marks. It was dusk when we got home and didn't see them. When we came outside this morning it was on the jump to run the race. But if they crowd one out they all try to cross out another, and keep it up until she has us so fretted that we'll be licked before any one makes an open move to get us. Part of her —— game. I don't think any of them will come unless they know we're away. But we'll stand watch tonight, and if one does come we'll catch him with a hunk of lead."

Thus did the coming of the marks reduce them to a low level in spirits. That day they completed the chimney and returned to Fair's cabin while it was yet light. Each had the same thought, and both ran to the log peeled after picketing the horses.

A second day had been crossed off, proving Watt's contention the visitor was choosing his time well. On entering the cabin they soon discovered two black beads in the water-pail.

"They're afraid of us," decided Watt.

"Or else the woman is keeping watch and trying to make us uneasy until her friends can join her," suggested Fair.

"It's plain she doesn't expect her medicine to work unless its backed up by murderers."

Convinced they had the truth of it they were not sure the woman's confederates might not be on hand for a night attack. Watt suggested they make their bed some distance from the cabin. But Fair objected, insisting he would not be scared away from his property.

"We stuck it out when we knew Agger's gang was coming. I'll split the night into two watches, but I won't quit the house."

Fair took the first watch and had been seated in the doorway with a rifle across his knees for more than an hour when he was startled by the soft *thud*, *thud*, of hoofs coming up the creek trail. He reached inside the cabin and found Watt's foot and gave it a shake. Watt came to attention at once and crawled to the door. He did not need to be told why his friend had aroused him. Securing his rifle he crawled outside and kneeled against the logs and waited for the intruder to dismount and steal closer. The night was black and he could see nothing beyond the end of the cabin.

"Whoever it is must feel pretty confident," Watt whispered to Fair. "And there's only one horse. If the others are afoot this chap is keeping well ahead of them."

Both waited for the horse to halt; but to their surprize the animal held to the path and his rider made no pretense at concealment.

Fair drew a bead on the path, depending on his ears alone. On came the horse until Watt believed he could make out motion against the black background of the growth. He was just about to call out when a voice cried:

"Ho! Inside the cabin there!"

"We have you covered. Ride up here or we fire," replied Fair from the doorway.

"Don't shoot! —— of a way to pay a man for riding way down here," grumbled the horseman. "I'm from the store. Old man sends a message."

"Light and come inside," directed Watt. "You're either doing us a mighty good turn, or you're playing us a trick. If the first you won't mind if we're sort of careful."

The man slipped to the ground and approached the door while Fair retreated to make a light. The fellow swore terrifically as he felt Watt's revolver pressed against his ribs.

"Next time the old man wants any word carried anywhere he can tote it himself," he wrathfully informed them.

"Have patience," soothed Watt, keeping the muzzle of the gun against the woolen shirt. "Ah, now we have a light! Step inside, please."

The candle burned brightly, and a tall, lanky young man, with corn-colored hair and light-gray eyes, stood revealed. Watt smiled cordially and shook him by the hand and apologized.

"We have to be careful, or we'll be losing our scalps. You have some message for us?"

"My name's Camwell. Come from the old man's State," growled the visitor. "He hornswoggled me into coming down here to tell you that the Cherokee woman and five men from Injun Territory stopped at his place for grub this evening and went into camp near by. One of the men was in the store alone yesterday, but so many breeds coming and going from the reserves that the old man didn't hitch him up till tonight with the Cherokee hussy."

"All Injuns, I reckon?" said Watt.

"Not a straight blood in the lot. They're a tough-looking gang. This is the talk: Slide out. Git off the crick and keep going. The men have come from Injun Territory to do for the Yankee. That's his talk. He knew I could tell other things. Most important is that one of them cusses is the Knife Thrower. His mother's people have outlawed him. Father was a white trader. Knife Thrower is so bad he can't keep a reg'lar gang together. Has half a dozen knives hitched to him besides his guns, and he'll always use steel 'stead of lead whenever he can. So you two want to git out before morning. Start now. My hoss is tired, but he don't git any rest round these parts. I'm going."

He made for the door. Watt called after him:

"Camwell, we owe you and the storekeeper a lot. If you'll let me pay you something——"

Camwell came about and thrust forward a truculent jaw and warned:

"See here! Quit that 'less you want to be 'tarnally licked before the killers git a whack at you."

"At least let me shake hands," said Watt, allowing the coin to drop back into his pocket.

Camwell grinned good-naturedly, but was a bit slow in taking Fair's hand.

"You must be all right on the hemp, or this feller wouldn't be tying up to you," he muttered.

Then he frankly confessed:

"I'm scared to stick here. If it was just plain trouble with no 'ticular frills I'd love to mix in. But when the Knife Thrower and his killers set in any one can have my seat."

With that he faded into the darkness and galloped away.

Watt blew out the candle and after a brief pause asked—

"Well?"

"They sha'n't run us off. Once we start running we'll always have to keep on the move. We'll stick."

"You know how much I enjoy running away from a fight; but this is different. Say the word and we'll ride for it."

"This is my cabin. I'm scared of the woman as you can't fight a woman. But these hired murderers of hers can't drive me off the creek."

"You're the boy they want the most. We'll give them a battle," cheerfully replied Watt.

For the moment Fair had forgotten the fact that he alone was the object of the woman's wrath. He had no desire to drag his friend into trouble. He said—

"Perhaps after all we'd better go."

"Because I said they're after you. Let's stay. They can't get us tonight if we stick in here. In the day-time we'll have even more advantage."

It was nearly time for Watt to go on guard, but as Fair could sleep none both sat in the doorway and waited for some sign of the enemy. Their nerves were at a high tension, and every time bird or animal made a sound their hands clutched tightly about their weapons. Along toward morning Fair fell asleep. With heavy eyes Watt watched the east kindle the fires. As the landscape caught the first light Watt stole to the end of the cabin and reconnoitered the grove. Returning he secured the pail and filled it at the well. When he reentered the cabin Fair was awake and was inserting a linen-cased cartridge into the breech of his rifle.

"Got an idea the sharp edge of the breech-lock wasn't cutting off the ends as——"

The rapid *thumpity-thump, thumpity-thump* of a galloping horse spoiled the explanation and sent them to the window and door.

"Only one man!" called out Watt from the door. "Look sharp out the back window! Probably a game, with t'others sneaking up on foot."

But it was no ruse. The horseman never drew rein until abreast of the cabin. A single glance at the man's clean-cut appearance caused Watt to lower his rifle and brush the buffalo robe aside.

"Man called Enoch Fair squat here?" asked the newcomer.

"Where you from?" asked Watt.

"Topeka. Does Enoch Fair squat here? I was told it was the first cabin."

"What do you want to know for?"

The fellow grinned sourly and drawled:

"Neighbor, I've got a writing for Enoch Fair. I like to be obliging, but I'm gitting fretted."

Fair appeared in the doorway and announced—

"I'm Enoch Fair."

"You look Northern," decided the messenger. "From a merchant in Topeka."

He handed over a sealed paper and wheeled his horse.

"Wait a minute, please," requested Watt. "Have something to eat. And there may be an answer."

"I'll eat better back at the little store, and be hungrier for waiting. There's no answer. Be sure you burn it after you read it."

And he took the path on the gallop and rode as if anxious to be clear of the creek.

"Read it," said Fair, passing the paper over to his friend. Watt's face looked much older as he read:

> "Mr. Fair. Missouri party here again, asking way to your place. Seems anxious to meet with your friend from the South. Came here from Lecompton and leaves soon to renew acquaintance."

There was no signature.

"Your Yankee brother has done as he promised," said Watt, tossing the paper on some coals in the fireplace and watching it curl up and yellow and burst into flame. "Missouri fellow is bringing me a black bead. I'm going to mizzle."

"We'll both go, of course. But where?"

"Only one path open to me—the Fort Riley road. When we get there we can stop long enough to breathe and make plans. I wouldn't let you come if it wasn't for that Cherokee woman and her breed killers."

"If we ride down the creek path we may meet the man who is looking for you. He probably quit Topeka soon after the messenger did," warned Fair.

"Then we'll go up the creek and strike across country over the Neosha-Riley road and keeping clear of the main road until we make the fort. You cook something to eat while I throw some stuff together."

They ate hurriedly, their ears open for hostile sounds, fearing every minute to discover the coming of the Knife Thrower and his gang, or the Missouri sheriff. Taking only their blankets, weapons and some smoked meat they mounted and galloped up the creek. It was not until they had reached Watt's cabin and halted to get a drink of water that the young Southerner noticed Fair was carrying his ax. When he expressed surprize Fair explained:

"Got the notion my Sharps wasn't cutting the end of the cartridge as clean as it should. The edge of this—" and he patted the ax—"is always ready. Feel more at home with it."

They kept to the timber in passing the Emery place, for the Emerys believed themselves in debt to the Cherokee woman for various gifts and might feel obliged to answer her questions. They would have passed the Dagget place without stopping, but the lawyer happened to be riding over his claim and saw them. He hailed them and cantered forward.

"We're going off the creek," informed Fair.

"Come up to the house and have some milk and something to eat."

"We've eaten. We can't stop," Watt told him.

"As close as that?" murmured the lawyer.

"Quite close," Watt grimly replied. "And Fair here is dodging some killers from Injun Territory."

"You mustn't lose any time, then. You have our best wishes. When it's all ended happily be sure and come to us."

They continued up the creek path—an old Indian trail leading south to the Arkansas river-road, the trade route of the Santa Fé traders—and found the footing easy for their horses. They held to a smart pace till the sun was overhead, when they turned their horses out to graze, and boiled coffee and ate some of the ham. Filling their pipes they resumed their flight. They were now at the head of Mill Creek and Fair was anxious to shift their course and ride northwest to Clark's Creek, striking it near its mouth and within a few miles of Fort Riley.

Watt shook his head and urged:

"Let's push on southwest till we hit the Neosha road. Our trailers will believe we're making for the Santa Fé trail and night will come before they can discover we've turned back north. We'll be clear of settlers down that way and there'll be no one to notice us when we switch our course for Clark's. And the travel will be faster than over the grass-lands."

Fair admitted this was good strategy, although it prolonged their journey, and he was impatient to reach the fort. They struck into an inferior prairie country, an extension of the Wakarusa-Neosha divide, but saw much good timber along many small streams. Watt shot several prairie-chickens for their supper, as this species of game was very abundant. They also saw many wolves, harmless scavengers. As they pressed on the country became more barren and desolate and Fair could understand why settlers had not squatted there. The ground was thickly sprinkled with white limestone, much of the outcroppings standing at a height above the prairie floor and inviting quarrymen to come and take building material.

Late in the afternoon they halted on a ridge and looked back down the divide. Suddenly Watt extended a hand. At first Fair saw nothing.

"Crossing at the foot of that limestone formation," guided Watt.

Fair caught it—a dark figure bobbing along and strongly outlined against the limestone.

"Horseman at a gallop!" he muttered. "Your Missouri man is keen on the scent."

"Look!" cried Watt, staring from under

his hand to shut out the light reflected from the rock. "See! There come two more!"

"Four more! No; five!" corrected Fair, as other figures trailed before the face of the rock. "Your man brings a posse!"

"You're the game they hunt," said Watt. "It's the Knife Thrower and his four men. They're bringing the black bead to you. The Cherokee woman is with them. I think she is the one next to the leader."

The knowledge he was being hunted sadly disturbed Fair's nerves.

"Why don't they strike across lots if they want to catch us?" he whispered.

"They haven't sighted us yet. They're trailing us. Once they reach the point where we turned, if the light holds that long, they'll be hot on our track fast enough. We must find a hiding-place and rest our horses."

"Their horses aren't any fresher than ours!" cried Fair.

"I want my nag fresh along toward the end of the race," insisted Watt. "They haven't seen us. We'll follow this stony strip to the patch of timber on the left. We'll light and lead our horses and pick our way and leave no trail. Where there's timber there'll be water."

They dismounted and made for the grove, taking care to leave no signs. Each minute lessened the danger of being tracked as the sun was about ready to end the day. At one end of the timber was a bold outcropping of limestone and between this and a small stream they picketed their horses in a patch of thin grass. From the fringe of timber Fair brought dead branches and Watt dressed the prairie-chickens and built a small fire in a recess among the rocks. While he broiled the supper he suggested that Fair climb the rocks and spy on their back trail. It was rapidly growing dark when Fair peered over the top and down into the lowlands.

"Couldn't see anything," he reported when he returned to Watt, who had hung their blankets around the fire to minimize the chance of its being discovered.

"They've gone into camp by this time. If any of them scout up this way we can hear their horses on the rocks."

After they had eaten they lay with their heads on the ground to catch any ominous sound, but heard nothing except the wolves scampering about and the hoarse croaking of frogs in the creek. As they had been without sleep for many hours they took their weapons and blankets to a recess at the foot of the rocks and almost at once were slumbering heavily.

The sun was up when they awoke, and in much haste they scrambled to the top of the limestone and breathed in great relief when they failed to sight any of the enemy. Watt ran to their horses and saddled and watered them at the creek. Fair made up the blanket-rolls and secured what was left of their food. Neither dared to pause to eat. With fragments of food in one hand and a rifle in the other they rode northwest for the headwaters of Clark's Creek.

Watt finished his breakfast, spoke to his horse and rode at a gallop. As Fair drew up beside him he said:

"Those fellows were surely up with the first light, and hunting our trail. They'll have to move slow not to lose us unless they guess we're striking to Riley. But fast or slow they must be close to us."

"I'm afraid they found where we changed our course," morosely agreed Fair. "It wouldn't take them long to cast about and satisfy themselves we never crossed the Neosha road to make for the Santa Fé trail. Once they learn that they'll know this is about the only direction we could take."

The bang of a Sharp's .52, and a patch of dust kicked up at one side, made them jump spasmodically and kick their heels into their horses. Only one man was in sight. He had rounded an outcropping of limestone and was making ready to fire again when the fugitives beheld him. Watt reined in and slipped to the ground and rested his rifle across the saddle. The horseman swerved in a short half-circle. With the crack of the rifle the fellow streaked back behind the rocks.

"Range too long to do any damage," Watt remarked as he mounted. "But they'll come in a bunch next time."

The breed must have been a considerable distance ahead of his mates for the comrades covered a mile before the five men and the woman, riding bunched together, as wolves run when starved and hunting in a pack, swept into view. It was soon obvious the pursuers were better mounted than their victims, for although the latter's horses were well-rested the galloping pack gradually cut down the lead. The woman was leading the chase, riding as easily and naturally as any of her fierce followers; and her exulting voice broke out in a staccato:

"*Ku! Ku!* Now! Now!"

Watt dismounted and again shoved the rifle across his saddle. The horsemen began scattering, but the woman held steadily on, screaming:

"*Ku! Ku!*"

Shifting his aim to her mount Watt fired and with the bang of the gun the horse reared upright and would have toppled over backwards and upon her had she not leaped aside. A man swerved in, and as nimble as a cat she mounted behind him as he swept by. Fair fired at a breed who wore a blood-red scarf around his head, but did no damage.

For several miles they raced along, turning and firing occasionally and continually being fired upon. Neither side scored a hit but the fugitives were shooting close enough to check the pursuit. It was plain that despite their advantage in numbers the breeds did not relish making it a fight in the open and were waiting until they could advance to close quarters under cover and finish their work with one rush.

Watt in the lead splashed through a shallow tributary of the Clark and yelled enouragement. Fair warned him—

"We're better off away from the timber."

"Breastworks ahead! We'll fight it out there. My horse is going lame. Picked up a stone," shouted Watt over his shoulder.

Then Fair saw the four walls of a cabin, standing in an oak-grove. It was roofless, having been abandoned for some reason before it was completed. Leaping to the ground they led their horses through the opening cut for a door and drove the animals to a sheltered end of the enclosure.

"A trap!" commented Fair as he heard the whoops of the enemy as the breeds left their horses and scattered behind trees.

"Can't be helped," Watt replied. "My nag was going lame."

And he whipped out his knife and removed a stone from a forward foot.

They tethered the horses to keep them from plunging back and forth and then proceeded to roll butts of logs into the doorway, filling it to the height of several feet. As they finished this additional defense a volley of lead ripped into the front wall. Then the grove became quiet as the breeds, moving with all the cunning of their red blood, noiselessly began encircling the rude fort. Taking opposite sides of the structure the comrades utilized the cracks between the unchinked logs for peepholes and searched for a glimpse of an enemy. And that was all they achieved—a fleeting glimpse as a form flitted from tree to tree. As the silence continued squirrels resumed their chattering. For some minutes there was no alarm.

Then came the twang of a bow-string, and a long arrow, with its foreshaft of hardwood mounted on a shaft of cane, curved high into the blue sky and fell and stuck upright inside the walls. Fair struck it with his rifle and knocked it within reach of Watt. A tiny parcel was tied to the foreshaft. Watt opened it and shook out two black beads. From the grove the husky voice of the Cherokee woman called out:

"The black path is laid down for two white men. Where there was one black path there are now two. It shall be so."

"I've dragged you into this!" Fair lamented.

"I've been in it from the start. Save the hand-guns for close fighting."

"I have my ax. You handle the revolvers."

A rippling volley encircled the walls. A heavy voice shouted:

"You two men in there. I can buy your lives of Little Hawk if you've got the price. I can't forget the white blood in me. Turn over your horses and a hundred dollars apiece and we'll let you go."

"Who's talking?" demanded Watt, trying to locate the speaker by his voice.

"The Knife Thrower. Mebbe you've heard tell of him. When he offers to trade the other man usually jumps at the chance."

Watt could see nothing of the leader but there was an unnatural bit of shadow extending from the foot of an oak. He lined the tree with his rifle and waited, saying—

"I must talk it over with my friend."

"Give you four minutes," was the answer, the breed again responding to his red blood by naming the sacred number of his mother's people.

And a brown rifle barrel began creeping around the trunk of the oak: then a brown hand came into view. Watt fired, but hit the barrel instead of the hand. With a howl of pain the ruffian dropped his rifle to nurse his benumbed digits. Then he roared:

"—— you both! You'll pay for that in red coin."

Watt stuffed another cartridge into the breech and waited, well-satisfied with himself. The explosion of Fair's gun caused him to jerk his head about in time to behold a man slipping head-first over the end wall to fall limply between the horses.

"I—I never heard him," panted Fair, his face distorted. "Just happened to look up and see him."

"Good work!" yelled Watt. "Ho! You turkey buzzards out there! We've just killed one of your men. Call their names and see who doesn't answer."

"You lie, you white dog!" retorted the Cherokee woman. And to prove it she called the roll. Only four men answered.

Watt crawled under cover of the door barricaded along the wall to where the horses were crowding aside to keep clear of the dead man. He quieted the horses with a few words and dragged the breed away. The fellow had left his rifle outside and was armed with two cap and ball Colts of the popular thirty-six caliber.

Watt appropriated the weapons and then exulted:

"Ho, Knife Thrower! We have given a black bead to one of your men. He will never answer to his name again. He has a white scar across his face and wears a gay buckskin coat."

Contrary to his expectations the death of the breed caused no further outcry from his friends. There was something very sinister about the continued silence. The besieged fancied they could hear stealthy movements on all four sides of the logs; and for some minutes they crawled back and forth to guard against a surprize attack. A bullet whipped over the front wall and struck the butt of Fair's gun. Before his mind could work he had rolled to one side. Watt warned:

"They've taken to trees! Get into a corner!"

Rubbing his hand to restore circulation Fair obeyed, and examined his rifle. The stock was furrowed but otherwise the weapon was undamaged. Several more bullets came inside the logs, all from over the front wall. Once the breeds realized the advantage of pouring in their fire from all sides then would the sacred formula of the Cherokee woman prove its potency. Even with the killers remaining as they were it would be extremely dangerous for the two friends to show their heads above the logs; and unless they took this great risk it would be impossible for them to scan the treetops and discover a foe. With the darkness the fight would be at close quarters.

Enraged and alarmed at their helplessness, Watt endeavored to enlarge a crevice between the logs but found the new loophole only afforded him a lateral view. Then his hoarse muttering ceased and he began pushing his rifle barrel through the opening. He aimed carefully and fired. Yells and whoops from the hidden marksmen mocked his effort, for they believed he was shooting at random. After the smoke cleared away Watt smiled in deep content and reloaded and again thrust the rifle through the hole. The fire from the trees became more galling, but Watt paid no heed to it and waited nearly a minute before discharging his piece. There came more derisive shouts from the enemy and a repetition of the Southerner's quiet smile.

"Work over here," he softly called to Fair.

Fair gained his side and found an opening for his rifle.

"What are you shooting at?" he murmured. "All the men, at least, have taken to trees."

"Their horses. Hate to do it. I've landed two out of the six. Watch the little knoll through the narrow opening. They left their nags on the other side and two have wandered into sight. But be sure you kill as a wounded animal will give the game away."

The breeds, on their part, were so sure of bagging their quarry they were taking care not to injure the two horses inside the logs. The head of a horse showed above the mound.

"I have him lined," warned Fair. The poor animal slowly grazed his way to the top and at last turned with one side toward the fort. He dropped with scarcely a kick.

"Three!" softly exulted Watt.

"I believe they all are in trees, even the woman, or she'd see what we're doing. Why can't we ride for it?"

"We must get another horse first," insisted Watt.

Five minutes passed before a head showed at the top of the knoll. The animal remained almost stationary, the head showing every now and then as he ceased grazing for a moment and lifted it to take notice of the gunfire in the grove. Like the scream of a wounded panther rang out the voice of the woman, and the comrades could hear boughs rustling as she hurriedly descended to the ground.

"They're killing the horses! They're killing the horses!" she shrieked.

The horse at the knoll heard her wild outcry and took a few steps forward and upward, and the two rifles were fired together, and the tally was four out of six.

With hoarse cries two of the besiegers began working down to the ground, the woman calling for the men to get the horses away from the knoll, the Knife Thrower yelling for one of them to remain in his tree so there might be two rifles to rake the logs.

"Now or never," said Watt.

And he knew their chances of escape were greatly reduced once the killers left their lofty perches. Warning his friend to be ready to aid in clearing the doorway Watt crawled along to the end of the enclosure and unfastened the horses and drove them back to the opening. They had not removed their blanket-rolls, and their preparations for dashing forth were limited to gathering up their weapons, including the ax, and removing the barricade at the door. Working from opposite sides of the opening they quickly dragged the log-butts away, but before they could mount the woman was calling to the men to guard against the move.

"Look out! They're ready to ride for it!" she screamed. "*Kul Kul*"

"We're coming!" shouted the Knife Thrower.

"Too late! We can't make it!" groaned Watt.

The faint crack of a rifle from the southern edge of the timber did not impress them as being unusual until it came the second time. While they were trying to find an explanation one of the breeds on the ground loudly warned:

"Some one's shooting at us from the open! Can't see how many!"

"Give 'em lead! Give 'em lead!" roared the Knife Thrower as he gained the ground and turned his back on the fort yet taking care to keep sheltered by an oak.

"I don't know what it means, but now's the chance for us to leave," said Fair.

They swung into the saddle just as the Knife Thrower discharged his rifle toward the knoll and then rapidly emptied his hand-guns. He heard the horses behind him, and with the howl of a wild animal reversed his position. Watt glimpsed the evil face and fired his revolver. He missed, but disconcerted the breed who was on the point of flinging one of his knives. The heavy blade went wild and stuck quivering in a butternut. As the two horses cut into the Indian path the woman's voice, now coming as clear as a bell, was announcing:

"It's only one man. He rides away. Turn back and follow those two."

The Knife Thrower repeated the command, but his men were beyond the knoll and exchanging shots with the unknown when Watt and Fair rode out of ear-shot. Watt's mount ran well and showed no signs of lameness.

"Which two will follow us?" asked Fair.

"Hope the woman won't. Deadly as a cotton-mouthed moccasin, and we can't fight her back."

"Who was the man who helped us?"

Watt shook his head, and regretted:

"Wish we could have circled back and joined him. With his help we could clean out the gang."

"The woman said he rode away. He's safe."

"Safe because he stuck to the open. Let's pull clear of the timber. We can easily stand off two of them." He turned from the path to make the prairie and glanced back to address Fair. The latter opened his mouth to shout a warning. Watt started to face to the front just as a low-hanging bough caught him on the side of his head and swept him senseless from the saddle.

With a groan of despair Fair jumped his mount ahead and secured the horse and then dismounted and endeavored to drag Watt to his feet. But the blow had been a heavy one and the Southerner's legs were as unsubstantial as two strings. Fair picked him up and with a heave of his powerful shoulders threw him across the saddle, then mounted his own horse and kept the two animals side by side, his right hand clutching Watt's collar to hold him in place; and in this fashion he gained the edge of the timber and made what speed he could.

The accident to his friend had overwhelmed him. His naturally keen faculties were confused and it was not until he had slowly covered half a mile that he bethought himself to halt and tie his companion to the saddle with a picket-rope. He dared not halt long enough to learn the exact nature of Watt's wound, but the sagging head and limp legs and arms made him fear the worst. He knew there were a few settlers on the creek, and his only hope was to find a cabin and take shelter.

He kept the two horses at a gallop although it hurt him cruelly every time he glanced at the rolling head and flapping arms. As he regained control of himself he found the future to be drear and forbidding. He was as one lost. All his hopes of achievement in this strange land, where the rifle ruled, were built upon the Southerner's companionship. Now he realized it would have been impossible for him to have remained on the creek alone, even if the Red Bead had not been against him. With Watt gone the old sickness for the home hills would return. He had reached the end of things. But as the pendulum can swing only so far, so now, while he was in the lowest depth, he muttered an exclamation of relief as he glimpsed a cabin ahead. It stood with its east side facing the prairie and the sunrise and with the timber crowding close to the other side. He glanced back and was doubly relieved to behold no sign of his pursuers.

Riding to the end of the cabin he dismounted and got Watt to the ground and slipped a hand inside his shirt and found the heart was still at work. Then he remembered no one had welcomed him, and he called out for those inside to come forth. There was no sign of life about the place. He examined the bruise on the side of the head and rejoiced to find no indications of a fracture. He opened the door and carried his friend inside and placed him on some buffalo-robes at one end of the room. Running outdoors he led the horses to a horse-hovel well-masked by a tall clump of prickly-ash.

Expecting to be attacked at any moment he darted back to the cabin and snatched up a pail and looked about for a well. He could find none. No horsemen were in sight on the prairie, and trusting none were near in the timber he hurried to the creek. He was surprized to discover he was still carrying his ax and no other weapons. He had no recollection of picking up the ax after he had carried Watt into the cabin.

At the moment Fair started for the creek Watt groaned and lifted his head and let it fall back. He opened his eyes and stared blankly about him, then closed them while he essayed to orient himself. For a bit he was an impersonality, then he identified himself by name. He was in a strange place, and the log walls stimulated him to remember Fair and the fight at the unfinished cabin. When he got this far the rest of the puzzle fitted itself together and the picture included everything up to the time he started to lead the way from the timber to the open country.

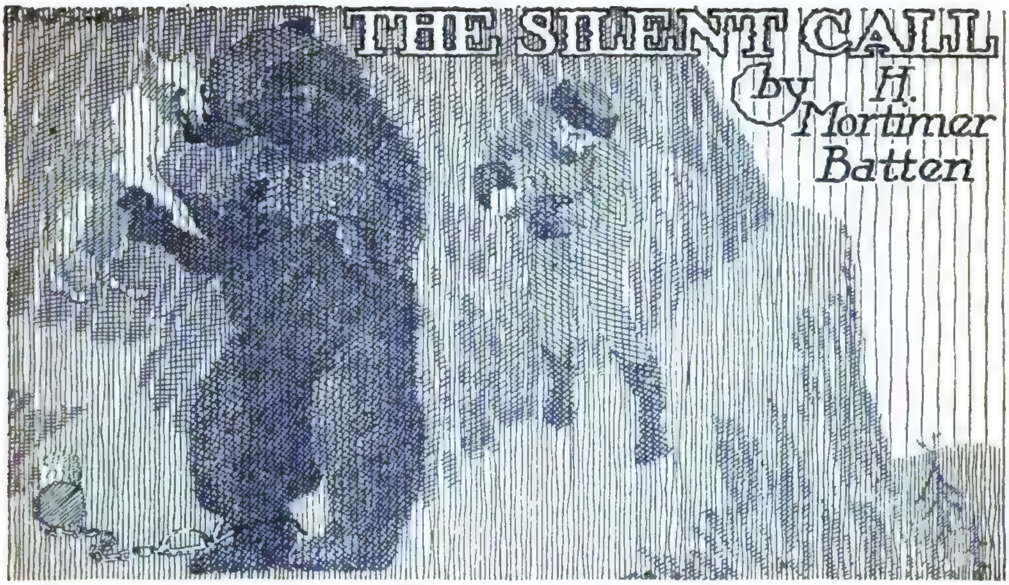
But he had no recollection of being hurt. Consequently he had not the slightest notion as to what had happened to him. He repeatedly sent his mind back to the flight and worked forward to the time when the mental trail ended. The buzzing pain in his head helped him to locate his wound, only he believed he had been shot until a cautious examination revealed a big bruise. It was all so strange he could not determine just how much of it was real and what proportion was due to the workings of a befuddled mind.

When a figure glided through the doorway Watt assumed it was Fair, and after a glance at the newcomer he closed his eyes. When he opened them a dark face was pressed close to his. With an effort he decided it was not his friend; and his dazed faculties coordinated things enough for him to sense disappointment. He felt the stranger's deft hands stripping him of weapons and when he next opened his eyes the man was gliding back to the door and peering outside.

With a mighty effort Watt ousted illusions from his mind and conquered the benumbing weakness that had permitted him to take only an impersonal interest in the stranger's presence. The fellow's acts and appearance spelled danger to himself and Fair. He raised himself on one elbow and managed to drag himself into a sitting posture with his back to the logs.

"Who the —— are you?" he faintly demanded.

TO BE CONTINUED



THE SILENT CALL

by H. Mortimer Batten

JOE MINWELL was in a boastful and reckless mood when that night he bade farewell to the lounging half-breeds at Moose Crossing, and proceeded, somewhat unsteadily, to the cedar landing-stage, where his birchbark canoe was piled high with equipment. On one of the packs Myah, his dog, lay curled up, and as Minwell stepped in, sending the boat ricocheting across the dark waters, the animal looked up, her rounded scalp and huge, pointed ears in wolfish silhouette.

On either side gloomy cedars overhung the waterway, but though there was as yet no moon, the Indian could evidently see well enough, for with rapid, silent strokes he piloted his canoe through the multitude of protruding snags, and ere an hour was past he had gained the Kiawawa Rapids, where a giant pine marked the stepping-off place of the first portage.

No sane woodsman would ever have attempted to shoot that rapid at night time—indeed, there were few who thought it worth the risk in broad daylight—but tonight Minwell was supreme in his own confidence.

So, despite the fact that he had scarcely an inch of freeboard, they took the downward plunge, and Myah sat up with nervous inquiry as the first cloud of spray drenched them through. Her eyes sought her master's keen, expressionless face, and she lay down again, confident in his wisdom and judgment.

But before many seconds had elapsed Minwell realized that distance and speed were deceptive in the darkness, while the white foam pathways played strange tricks with one's judgment. There was no landing now; it was a case of going on to the end.

One sea after another they shipped, while overhead the bright stars whirled, the Indian stooping forward, staring fixedly, the sinews of his naked, scraggy arms standing out like the fibers of a jack-pine. Water dripped from his face and from his long, black hair, but before the first swift run was passed the canoe swung round, gripped by an irresistible force, and the man stooped lower still as he hauled on the paddle, putting forth his utmost strength to right their water-logged craft.

Snap! It was the worst thing that could have happened under the circumstances, for the paddle broke in his grasp just above the blade. With an oath he flung aside the useless shaft, and turning began frenziedly to grope under the packs for his spare paddle. He gripped it, but it jammed, and the game was up. The canoe took a downward plunge, still broadside, and there was a report like a pistol-shot as her keel smote the surface. Then over she went, man, packs, and dog, over and over half a dozen times, glimmering grotesquely, finally to settle bottom upward, weighed down by the sodden dunnage jammed beneath the thwarts. A second or two later she struck with a grinding crash, and went to bits.

Thus Minwell the Cree passed out of human record. No special inquiries were made, for Minwell had no debts. So far as the world of the north was concerned, he simply failed to return from his hunting-grounds, and the north went on grinding out her dramas without him.

But that day another drama opened. Daybreak found a little yellow dog sitting and shivering at the water's edge near the tail of the rapids. A slim little muckle-breed she was, part whippet, part terrier, though her big erect ears showed wolfish ancestry, harking back from the veins of the northern malemiut. She was whimpering distressfully, watching the water, her nostrils quivering, as if she expected something to rise ghost-like from the whirling flood, then she moved to another point, and so on for many hours. She did not know that her master was dead—she merely knew that she had missed him, and so at length she set off down the creek, heading toward those dim northern hunting-grounds from which Minwell had wrung his living.

Had Myah been a white man's dog, she would have returned to the settlement when other hopes died, but being an Indian dog, the sullen independence of her training bade otherwise. She had known but one master, and there was nothing in her limited dealings with the rest of the world to create a sense other than aloof distrust. So, in her innermost desires, first and foremost lingered the wish to find Minwell, or failing in this, she would go on somewhere—somehow, without him.

Myah was little more than a puppy, and her character was yet in the mold. Accustomed, like all Indian dogs, to fending for herself, she did not want for food, for she knew how to surprize the wary red squirrels which swarmed in thousands everywhere, and she was a past master in the art of ambushing Wahboos, the wood-hare. She knew the scream of the lynx, and the hollow bay of the timber wolf, so Myah lived when grievous misfortune would have befallen one less able than herself.

ON THE third day of her searching she saw a great eagle swooping and circling over something which lay, freshly stranded, on a sand-bank, but she merely steered clear of the thing and the place, for eagles are not to be trusted; but even had she seen all that there was to see, she would not have understood.

Myah was heading for the musquash flats of the prairie foothills—where surely she would find her master—and between the mountain forests and the plains there lies a vast belt of country which, at certain seasons, is brimming with winged game, at other seasons, lifeless as a desert. This was the gameless season, and as the birch and balsam groves slowly gave way to vast undulations of tundra and jack-pine, hunger befell Myah.

Always she was watching for game, and time and again after an elaborate stalk, she discovered that the object of her excitement was not a ground squirrel at all, but the stump of a pine snapped off short by the gale. Once she flattened like a rag on seeing a big barren lands wolf come down to drink half a mile away, and once she saw a herd of caribou, and for several days she followed them, hoping that one would die or fall out, or in some other way prove obliging.

That hope also died, and she returned to the river, very lean and lank now, but her wild instincts told her not to yield to the temptation of trying to satisfy her hunger by drinking cold water as a city-bred dog would probably have done. She loped steadily on, still looking for her master—though three weeks had elapsed since last she saw him—keeping always to the hollows, peering coyote-like over every ridge before she crossed it, and so in course of time the jack-pine country also was crossed, and ahead lay the rugged grandeur of the eastern slopes, beyond that the brimming prairies.

So it came about that Myah, so weak now that she tottered in her steps—a pitiable skeleton of a dog, but still searching, still hopeful—gleaned from the wind the tidings of a great feast somewhere to the northern side. Up-wind she drifted, checking, readjusting her course till there, in a hollow, lying among the sage bush, she beheld a dead steer, and standing by it—a mammoth grizzly!

Myah was too hungry to be afraid—too near death herself to fear its final stoop. So she drifted up to seek the mercy of a king.

But here was another molded by the hands of the lean, inexorable north! The grizzly raised his head and looked at her.

He was accustomed to seeing coyotes near at hand while he feasted, and usually he took no heed of them. If they became too bold he would dash out and scatter them, but he had more sense than to follow far, for he knew that the wild dogs are fleeter than the wind. Perhaps, however, he recognized Myah for what she was, a creature of man's threshold, a foe in hand with the deadliest of all his foes. Myah drifted up, and then with a coughing snarl the grizzly charged.

A coyote would merely have doubled and twisted, then yapped his mockery over the dust clouds, but Myah was so weak that, startled and surprized, she fell, and the grizzly, more surprized than she was, charged right over her and was carried on.

Myah struggled up and headed for the sage-brush, sneaking from bush to bush, but the grizzly knew now that he could catch her. Silently, systematically, he set to work to hunt her out, striking down the cover with his forepaws, listening silently, then drifting to another point. Again he would strike and listen, while Myah wormed in and out, this way and that, knowing now that she was in mortal peril of her life.

That grizzly was hunting not for food, which was abundantly at hand, but for the vicious joy of killing, so he would not readily abandon his quest. The minutes passed, and his first tactics having failed, he worked himself into a fury, crashing headlong hither and thither, rearing up with forepaws widely flung, crashing in another direction, guided only by his nostrils. Myah crawled and bellied and crept, flattened out and panting when an opportunity occurred, but at length he sighted her.

Now it was merely a matter of time. Headlong he dashed after her, and as she sought the cover he stole silently and swiftly to the other side, so that they all but collided. The twigs and the sand flew as from a whirlwind as he struck, then followed hot at her heels, scattering the bush which hindered her but was too slender to hinder him. In and out, round and about, feinting, dodging, diving headlong, but each close call was closer than the last, and Myah assuredly was doomed.

Then, in the very act of charging, the grizzly froze to a statue. For a moment he stood, deadly still, then swinging from right to left he stole away—straight and silently and true for the tundra heights.

And, as Myah lay panting, she heard the *click-click* of a pony's hoofs, which presently ceased, then a man's voice, hushed and contemplative, as when one thinks aloud.

"——!" said the voice. "Blamed if I didn't think so! A grizzly too!"

Languidly, as if possessed of a sleeping-sickness, dragging herself along on her forepaws, trailing her hind limbs, little Myah strove to obtain a view of him. She did not mean to go to him—oh no! She meant to creep away and hide, for, always fearful of a race she did not know, her recent experiences had not tended to make her more trusting. But, as she saw him, a new fear fell upon her, the fear of the merest atom of a slave in the presence of a god-born king.

Part plainsman, part mountaineer, Ralph Arnold partook of the rugged splendor of both. He was looking down at his dead steer, then his keen gaze rose as without dismounting he examined the tracks. So Myah among the twisted scrub found herself looking into the man's eyes, and humbled before, she cowered into the dust, awaiting his will.

"What's that blame little coyote up to? Skit!"

His hand fell to his belt, and he withdrew a heavy automatic pistol. Still the creature in the sage did not stir.

"Well I be ——!" muttered Ralph Arnold, and still holding his gun he slipped from his pony and approached Myah on foot.

Myah lay very still, her muzzle between her forepaws, and Ralph, stooping over her, raised her lean little head in one strong hand.

"You poor little critter!" he said aloud. "Blessed if you ain't pretty well all in!"

Then with Myah under one arm he rode homeward, fording the river which alone could whisper the story of Minwell the Cree.

Ralph had two dogs of his own, one mostly greyhound, the other chiefly bull-terrier, sturdy, hard-fighting beasts, kept for trailing dangerous game, and therefore schooled in a rough school. He lived alone in a small cabin, with a corral adjoining. He kept a few cattle, a few sheep, and several horses, and eked out a living by prospecting and hunting. Ranching was his hobby.

Thus opened up the third phase of Myah's life, and so strange to her it at first seemed that she would not eat the food Ralph offered, so he fed her by hand, and the satisfying of her bodily cravings came to her with the mental associations of the man's kind hand, an impression which left upon her mind an indelible mark.

But Ralph did not want the dog. She was of no earthly use to him, and as the days passed, and she regained her strength, it became very evident that her sufferings had completely broken her spirit. Ralph often wondered what she had suffered, and when at night time she lay at his feet, looking up into his eyes, he was prompted to caress her by the same sense of sympathy that had led him to take her in. But Ralph was no coward himself, and he hated it in other things, so when Myah fled in terror when the stove smoked, when she cowered in abject fear before Spanker and Rocket, who were above heeding her, he usually drove her angrily from his sight. He did not know just what his caresses meant to this little waif of the hills, nor what weight his curses carried.

One day another mountaineer rode by, and stopped to pass the time of day with Ralph.

"How much for the purp?" he inquired jestingly as he mounted to go.

"You can have her for an old pair of socks," Ralph replied. "Did you ever see such a scaramouche?"

They both looked at Myah and laughed.

"Maybe she'll improve when you've fed her up," observed the visitor, and went his way.

All that day Myah hid under the bungalow, for she knew that they had laughed at her and said unkind things!

But one thing Ralph had to admit—Myah was teachable. Being an Indian dog, she was at first of the opinion that anything she could take and hold was rightly hers. To call her a thief would be unfair, for she simply did not understand, and one day Ralph lost his dinner. Naturally he punished her, but he never had to punish her a second time for that, or any other, proved offense.

Yet, having no use for the dog, and despising her not a little, it was only natural that Myah drifted into a backwash. She ceased to look for her master's caresses, dear as they were to her. She loved him none the less, for he had won her heart in the hour of her direst need, but by degrees she imbibed the knowledge that her place in his household was a lowly one. So, like many a good man, who sees nothing better in store for him, she settled with sad resignation to accept her humble lot.

ON THE evening of the day that Ralph took Myah home, he had set out at sunset with two huge bear-traps on each side of his saddle. These he had carefully set by the carcass of the steer, and every day since, he had examined the sets through his glasses from a distant ridge. A month or more had now passed, but the grizzly had not been back, yet Ralph, who knew well the ways of grizzlies, still watched intently from the windward side. And one morning, sure enough, the ground all round the steer was raked and furrowed, and one of the traps, together with its heavy log, was gone.

Ralph went home for his two dogs, knowing well that the grizzly, hampered as it was, would not travel many miles, but he left Myah shut up in the cabin, remarking as he dropped the latch:

"We don't want you, miserable little croaker!"

Spanker and Rocket were unquestionably brave dogs, but on encountering the trail of that grizzly both of them said a good deal, but did not seem overanxious to run it. Their part was merely to indicate the right direction, and Ralph, armed with a high velocity rifle, would do the rest; and at length, after a good deal of coaxing and urging, they took up the line. Soon they were heading over country through which no horseman could follow, and Ralph, making a detour, rejoiced to learn from the way in which they threw their tongues that they were warming up to their work. Five miles farther on he intercepted them, and learned to his disgust that they were chasing a mangy little coyote!

Angrily he whipped them off, and precious hours of light were lost in refinding the trail. Again the dogs set off, heading now for the high country, which seemed more hopeful. Up and up they climbed, while Ralph, listening at intervals for their baying, came eventually to the topmost barrens, but still could not find them.

Evening was near when eventually he discovered them—Spanker wallowing in a pool, Rocket rolling in the sand having completed his wallow. Ralph cursed and raved and lashed at them, for the strenuous day had resulted in nothing at all, and with night so near there was nothing for it but to return to the valley. Tomorrow they would start afresh.

It must have been an hour or so previous to this that a new restlessness fell upon the little yellow dog imprisoned in the cabin. She got up and began to whine, sniffing and scratching at the door, leaping to the bench and peering out of the window, her eyes bright, her ears immensely acock. Her whines turned to yelps, her yelps to frenzied howls. She snapped at the legs of the bench, she hurled herself, clawing wildly, at the door. At length she attacked the window, scratching at the joints, then standing back she hurled herself at the glass with the frenzy of a trapped animal. It cracked across but beat her back, bruised and dazed, yet gnashing her teeth she hurled herself again, this time to fall, cut and shaken, on the grass without, leaving a shattered square behind her. For a moment she ran hither and thither, undecided which way to take, then straight and true she headed for the river, and across.

The descent Ralph chose, though a perilous one, was by far the quickest, and the wiry pony on which he was mounted was fully accustomed to those giddy shelves. He would have trusted her where he would hardly have trusted himself on foot, and so, as the glory of the sunset faded from orange to gold, Ralph, whistling jauntily, for his anger was soon forgotten, looked out across the rolling ridges from a narrow game-track across the cliff face, a drop of close upon eight hundred feet directly beneath his right elbow. The wind was behind him, which was unfortunate, and his two dogs, head to tail, followed closely at his pony's heels.

Presently they reached a point at which a deeply cut fissure ran darkly into the mountain face, and here there was a perilous elbow turn to the left, where the track was partly washed away. Ralph had all but gained it when the light directly ahead was shut out by what looked like a great boulder, moving silently round the bend, and completely blocking the only way of travel.

Next moment Ralph's heart leaped as it had never leaped before, for there, not forty paces away, stood the grizzly he was after, the trap still fast to one forepaw, its little pig eyes, red with rage, fixed upon him.

For a moment Ralph remained spellbound, so also his pony. He heard the whimper of his dogs as they turned and fled. Then there came an agonized scream from his cayuse, which, unable to turn on the narrow shelf, reared up, and hung there, poised in giddy suspense.

Ralph had no time to disengage his rifle from the saddle-holster, but he quickly slipped his feet from the stirrups and prepared to dismount on the cliff side. He heard a *cough-cough* from the fur-clad monster ahead, and knew that it was about to charge; he heard the clanging of the steel trap, and the rumble of the log on the naked rocks. Then over the pony went, backwards, to fall with a thud, pinning him against the wall, one leg under the girth.

Through the unbelievable nightmare of it all Ralph, peering up, saw the bear lumbering toward him, foam flying from its yellow fangs as it slashed at the trap and the iron chain which sorely hindered its progress. Desperately the man fought to obtain possession of his automatic, but pinned as he was he could not reach it. On the grizzly came till its way was barred by the thrashing hindlegs of the pony, and as the monster reared to strike, Ralph saw that only a miracle could save him now. The gorilla-like arm flashed out, he heard the terrible, rending thud, and next moment the pony was hurled from beneath him, to spin giddily downward into space. And there, not five feet away, nothing between them now, both huge paws upraised, one with the trap as proof of the evil about to be avenged, Ralph beheld the death of which he had sometimes dreamed, yet sought to discredit in his unuttered prayers.

He was free now, and struggling to regain his pistol he leaped back, but—there was no time. One bullet would not stop the brute at such close range, even had there been time to aim and fire it, but, as the very buzzards in the blue above paused in their glide, something happened.

It was as if a yellow cloth, borne by the wind, went hurtling past, to smite the grizzly's face and there to hang, flapping wildly as the monster snarled and shook itself.

Myah! Little Myah! There, her sharp fangs fast in the grizzly's snarling face, shaking and snatching as she hung, was the mongrel dog whose spirit has been broken on the long and hungry trail! The other dogs—

the fighting dogs—were gone; they must almost have brushed her from the shelf as she, in the desperation of a deadly fear, came on to meet the death from which they fled; and now, between Ralph Arnold and the bear, was one who knew that foe of old, and hated him.

It was merely a second's diversion, but it was the needed second. Two massive paws clutched her, and hurled her back at her master's feet. There was another coughing roar, but accompanied now by a pistol shot, followed by shot after shot like the tearing of calico. There was a heavy thud as the blue flame ceased, the clash of steel, the sound of great claws rasping naked stone, and Ralph and Myah were alone.

In the quiet that followed, Ralph heard a sound from far below, and knew that his pony had reached the valley. He peered over the edge and saw a dark mass following it, spinning as it fell in a way that turned him sick. Then the man crouched back, and buried his face in his arms, shuddering, groaning, till he felt a cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and his hands groped out in the tenderest of caresses.

A FEW days later the other mountaineer returned and called at Ralph's cabin with the news.

"How's the purp getting on?" he inquired, with another jesting wave toward Myah.

Then Ralph rose, and shook his massive fist beneath his friend's bristling jowl.

"You be careful what you say about that dog," he advised. "Money wouldn't buy her. No, not all the money in the West!"

So, with the things that go to make it, pride came to Myah, and she raised her head to the dignity of her place in the love of the man who had befriended her. But there are mysteries in the dog world which man can not solve, and Ralph was confronted by one of them when for weeks after he contemplated a square of parchment over a broken window pane.

INDIANS EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI TODAY

by Alanson Skinner

IT IS not generally known that Wisconsin boasts of the largest Indian population east of the Mississippi, the census of 1910 giving 10,142, of whom the most numerous were the Chippewa or Ojibway, the Oneida, Menomini, Winnebago, Potawatomi, Brothertowns and Stockbridges. Since 1910, however, the number of Indians has increased considerably.

After Wisconsin follows North Carolina with 7,851, mainly Cherokee and Croatans; Michigan with 7,519, Chippewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi; New York with 6,046, mostly Iroquois; and Mississippi with 1,253, principally Choctaw. The census fell down on Florida, however, as only 74 Indians were reported, of whom 16 were said to be Seminoles. There are probably in excess of 500 Seminoles in the Everglades, from the best information that I was able to gather that very year from the Indians themselves, but at that time at least, it would have been decidedly unhealthy to attempt to make an accurate census of them.

Most of the Indians enumerated above are in their native homes, but the Oneida, Brothertowns, and Stockbridges of Wisconsin are all originally New York or New England Indians who purchased lands of the Menomini and moved west in 1830-1840.

The Oneida are one of the well-known Iroquois tribes of the Five Nations, the Brothertowns are made up of remnants of various Algonkian peoples, including the Narragansett, Montauk, Pequot and Mohegan. The Stockbridges are likewise much mixed, but are principally Mahikans—Mohicans—from the Hudson River below Albany.

The Oneida, Brothertown and Stockbridge have all lost all trace of their ancient life and customs, although the Oneida still retain their language. They are engaged principally in farming and various trades, whereas the native Wisconsin tribes still retain in considerable measure their ancient rites and ceremonies, and still eke out a part of their existence through hunting and fishing.

Arthur Schneider

THE ADVENTURE OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali

by George E. Holt

Author of "The Adventure of the Second Scribe," "The Story of the First Scribe," etc.

IN A tiny village hidden among the mazes of the foot-hills of the northern Atlas sat Mohamed Ali, the outlaw. With him sat three others, and these four talked about a fifth with words of friendship and concern.

"If it be the will of Allah, then indeed he is dead," said Sid Aidomar, who had been Mohamed Ali's *Khalifa* when Mohamed Ali was basha of the city of Tangier, and thoughtfully rubbed his right cheek where a white crescent marked the course of a tiger's claw.

"And if it be the will of Allah that he is not dead, then he lives," observed M'Barak, who had been Mohamed Ali's Second Scribe, making more at ease the posture of his small body.

His voice was as gentle and musical as that of a woman, and his eyes—his eyes were those which not long since had looked out from the slit in a woman's face-covering and had won for him a way to freedom in the sudden passion of a palace guard.

"As both things are as true as the fact that I have but one ear," then said Hamed Mortadi, First Scribe, "and as we know not what is the desire of Allah in the matter—*Ya la! I* am inclined to believe that which will give me no cause for sorrow. He is a wise man, this captain of the guards, and a brave and strong one—stronger even than you, Mohamed Ali—and as Allah loves a man who is both strong and wise and brave—and as that man may do many marvels which are pleasing to the eyes of the Prophet—I myself believe that the captain has not yet ridden the wood; but, on the contrary, that he is engaged in making life a bed of cactus for some of our enemies. What think you, Mohamed Ali?"

"Nothing at all, of this matter," answered the outlaw with a shrug of his great shoulders. "Nothing whatsoever. Except that now for some days three little men have tried to anticipate the will of Allah! Which is not good. It leads only to an attempt to imagine the unimaginable thoughts of Him and to attain His unguessable wisdom. And this is such pretense as has a frog when he fills himself with air in order that he may appear as an ox."

At the crestfallen looks upon the faces of his friends the outlaw's great laugh echoed through the village.

"Look not so. Look not so," he hastened to add. "It is a mistake which we all make. I myself many times have tried to anticipate the pleasure of Allah—it is child's play in which grown men indulge. What is written must be—but the book is closed and sealed. In Him I have confidence, because of the fact that I merit His confidence. And as He is just—*Allah kerim!* Look!"

Three heads turned as one, and eight eyes saw approaching through the single street

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"The Adventure of the Captain of the Guards," copyright, 1924, by George E. Holt.

of the village, a huge figure, clad in *sulham* of darkest blue. Dark of face and black of bushy beard; eyes that flashed and were stern, from beneath black eyebrows as heavy as a young man's mustache. With great strides which kept his long *sulham* swinging and swishing about his legs and revealed the multicolored under-garments and silken cords of *kumiah* and *shakarah*, he approached, uncovering white, strong teeth in a great smile.

Manifestly this was he on whom the talk had been running—he who was strong—stronger than Mohamed Ali—and wise and brave, he who had been captain of the palace guards when Mohamed Ali occupied the bashadorial residence. Mohamed Ali gave him name.

"Djillali!" he cried. "*Merahba bi kum!* Heaven be with you! Welcome. Thrice welcome. We feared——"

Gaining his feet, he squeezed the captain's arms in his strong hands and looked into the black eyes which screwed up and laughed beneath his scrutiny.

"Yes, Djillali, we feared," repeated Mohamed Ali.

"And there was some reason for fear," responded the captain. "Save for the mantle of Allah's protection, assuredly my friends would have walked the street in procession chanting, *'La illah ha!* But—by His grace—But it is a long tale, Mohamed Ali—and perhaps, after all, I am somewhat tired."

II

THE TURNED to receive the greetings of the others, then threw himself down upon a carpet and gave ear to the babel of words which followed. But after he had begun a dozen replies without being permitted to finish one, he raised a hand and stopped the noise in spate.

"This is far worse, my friends," he said, grinning, "than all my experiences. An you will, I shall tell you of the matters with which I have been concerned. Better I should tell you all once, rather than piecemeal a dozen times."

Thus lightly rebuked, the *Khalifa* and the First and Second Scribes set their jaws and fell silent, while Mohamed Ali—who had said no word of question—smiled maliciously and joyously.

"It came about first—" the burly captain took up his tale in a voice harsh as a soldier's should be—"that after you, Mohamed Ali, and all the others had left the palace, I released my guards, paid them for some months to come—I did not know how soon we might need them again—and ordered them to their homes. Then I went speedily to my own village near Azila, where I lay in safety until I received your summons. Then I found it necessary to arrange certain matters with my cousin, who lives in Azila town, and so I set out for that place. Upon the road I was overtaken by Sid Mamun, your Third Scribe, who had affairs of importance to attend in El Arache."

"All is well with him, know you?" Mohamed Ali interrupted. "He is the son of an old friend—and my protection was promised him. I supposed he was safe in his own village."

A cloud swept across the dark face of the captain.

"I—I fear not, *sidi*," he answered. "I fear not. In fact—I have a message from him—which I do not quite understand. In seven days, if he does not come here, I must ride to El Arache to see what may be done to aid him. He will then be in grave danger."

"*You* must ride to El Arache," growled Mohamed Ali. "Name of Mohammed! Can you not use correct grammar yet? Did you never attend school?"

"I—I do not understand, *sidi*."

The captain turned puzzled eyes upon his scowling chief.

"What——"

"*We* must go," roared Mohamed Ali. "Your pronoun was wrong. *We* must go."

Then the captain laughed, and agreed that he had been in error, and again took up his tale.

"Outside the high walls of Azila we parted, he to take the road which runs southward to El Arache, I to seek sanctuary in the half-ruined town. Night had fallen, and the guard at the north gate was both stupid and sleepy, so that he merely grunted as I strode past in such a manner as I would use were I basha at Fez. Speedily I found myself in the house of my cousin, where I lay for a day without inconvenience. In this time I learned that a new basha had been named by the Sultan—and he was——"

The captain stopped to spread his face into a broad grin, and his eyes sought those of Mohamed Ali.

"It was Ahmed bou-Bekr."

"Ahmed bou— Beard of the Prophet! Ahmed bou-Pig! Ahmed bou-Infidel! Ahmed bou——"

Mohamed Ali's voice choked into silence, and the veins of his neck and forehead swelled a little like cords tautened. Then he put one hand on the ground as if to arise.

"Come—come. Let us ride to Azila and deal with this swine as he deserves. Bou-Bekr Basha of Azila! My lord the dog, Governor of Heaven! Let us——"

But the captain held up a restraining hand, and his face grew grim.

"There is no need, Mohamed Ali," he said. "That which you would do has already been done. Bou-Bekr no longer is Basha of Azila. He is dead—very dead."

"Then perhaps he is Basha of El Hotama," growled Mohamed Ali. "But I should have liked this hand to make him so."

One strong fist closed until the knuckles showed white.

The captain gazed meditatively at his own right hand, but Mohamed Ali commanded—

"Then, in the name of Allah, let us have the story, instead of sitting like one of those grinning brass Buddhas which I have seen."

III

"UPON a day, then," continued the captain, laughing, "upon a day—I committed an error of judgment. There was one whom I greatly desired to see again—my old father. Wherefore I went upon the street before it was quite dark. As a result of which I very shortly found it necessary to fight three men who unexpectedly set upon me. One I killed—and the other two struck me upon the head so that I fell into darkness.

"From this darkness I came back to light just in time to observe that I was being thrown into a musty hole in the old city wall, and to hear one of my captors say to the other that the basha had ordered that I be locked up there—and forgotten. The great oaken and iron door, which I think had not been opened before for twenty years or more, was closed and locked.

" 'What shall we do with the key?' I heard one say to the other.

" 'He is to be forgotten,' was the reply. 'Wherefore assuredly there will be no further use for the key. Let us walk past the well at the Bab-el-Fahs and drop it into the water thereof. It is a deep well.'

" 'Good!' agreed the other. 'That we will do,' and they went off.

"Now the place I was in, my friends, was not at all to my liking—no more than were the words of those who had locked me up there. *Ai!* Azila must have been a marvelous city in those days when a hundred thousand people lived in its ruined houses, instead of a fiftieth of that number, and when the great walls which enclose the town were other than desolate ruins of stone channeled with secret passageways and honey-combed with forgotten rooms."

"*Ai*, walls fifty feet high and half as wide—I have seen," interjected the *Khalifa*. "And the white storks build their nests where armed lookouts once sat."

"You have seen," agreed the captain. "I knew, as I have said, that I was locked into one of those ancient rooms in the ruined wall, and the undisturbed dust told me that it had not been used for a generation at least. That I saw before my captors went away with their lantern. And also that there was no door other than the one which was now locked, and which was as strong as the unbroken stone walls about me.

"One window—no, it was only a hole in the wall, created by leaving out one stone when the wall was built. And it was six feet above my reach, although, had it been at my shoulders, I could not have gotten them through it.

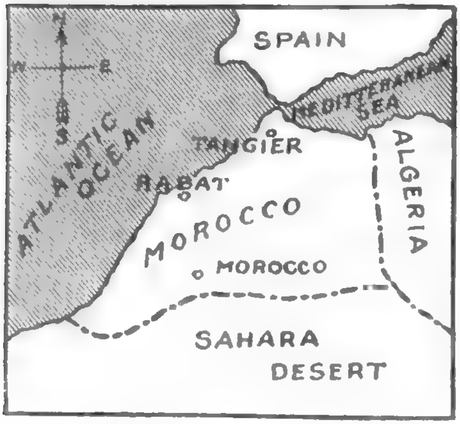
" 'This,' I thought, 'appears very remarkably like the end of Djillali. Wherefore, as there is nothing to be done in darkness, let us sleep and thereby gain strength for what may be accomplished in the light of tomorrow.'

IV

'PRAISE be to Allah, I slept well that night, so that when I awakened at the first faint sounds of morning both my body and my spirits were strong and eager. True, I was a little hungry, but I have often observed that hunger is a grindstone upon which the sword of one's wits may be sharpened. And it appeared to me, my friends, that I had real need of strength of body and strength of spirit *and* of a grindstone—for, as far as my first quick inspection of my quarters showed, I was to all intents and purposes buried alive in a tomb of solid stone.

"At first I am quite sure that I cursed the basha, bou-Bekr, and as many of his ancestors and relatives as I could remember. But then came to me remembrance of our proverb to the effect that between a day and a day Allah may put an end to many troubles, and my anger became very cheap and futile to me—as if I were cursing Allah Himself for the things which He had permitted to come about. Whereupon I saw the truth—that there was indeed no need for either anger or fear; because if He desired my death in the ruined city wall of old Azila, inevitably that death awaited me; whereas if He desired that I continue to live, neither bou-Bekr nor all the hosts of —— could bring about my end.

"But a more careful inspection of my tomb only indicated that the situation lay in the hands of Allah rather than of Djillali. Sufficient light came in at the tiny window to illuminate the room, as the night is illumined by a single candle perhaps, but this pale light sufficed to show me that I was enclosed on six sides by a box of hewn stone, except for the little doorway wherein an oaken door studded with iron offered strength equal to the walls of stone in which it was set.



"Still, strong as it was, it appeared to me that this door was the weakest link in the chain which bound me; wherefore I set about beating upon it heartily with the butt of the automatic pistol which you gave me, Mohamed Ali, and which, as I wore it in the fashion of the *Inglesi*, in a holster under my left arm-pit, my captors had not discovered. It was my intention, should any one open the door—I thought perhaps the talk of throwing the key in the well might have been carried on merely to frighten me—to use the *other* end of my pistol with such results as might follow; and if some passer-by should answer my callings, to suggest that he carry a message for me to Mohamed Ali.

"Now I had been at my task of putting dents into the oaken door but a moment when I heard voices outside, and other noises. As the speakers paused at the very door, I called to them, and also hammered some more with my pistol. Then:

" 'He makes much noise,' said a voice. 'Apparently he does not like his new house. Therefore let us get about the improvements we were instructed to make, and thus endeavor to overcome his displeasure.'

" 'And,' said a second voice, 'at least render him inaudible if not satisfied.'

" 'Sons of *Shaitan*,' I shouted, 'I would out of this. But let me out and I will fight you both—yes, and your master, Sidi Pig, and all the litter. Or better still, I will fill your fezzes with silver.'

" 'What use has a pig for silver?' jibed one. And the other—

" 'Better keep your silver to eat after we have walled up this doorway.'

"Hmph! This was business to a man's taste, was it not? Walling up the doorway! And I could hear the thump of stones as they were lifted down from the backs of arriving donkeys, and the scrape of mortar being mixed—and the snickers of the two who were making me as much a part of the city wall as old Mulai Ismáil used to make Christian slaves who failed to keep time in their tamping, when he was building the walls of Fez.

"Wherefore I went away from the door and sat down in a corner to ascertain just how much faith I really had in the power of Allah to get me out of this affair."

V

"NOW I have noticed a peculiarity of the minds of men, which is this: So long as a man feels that he may achieve his end without the direct intervention of Allah, his prayers are apt to be few and short; but when he stands face to face with a death which only Allah Himself may turn aside, his faith becomes like a rushing river—and his prayers also. Knowing this, I exerted myself to keep from such impudence toward Him—and occupied my mind repeating a *sura* from the Book. It was that chapter which tells of *El Hotama*, that apartment in hell which is the kindled fire of Allah which shall be as an arched vault above those who reside there—and the face of bou-Bekr, Basha of Azila, was very clear to my eyes among the flames. Then, strangely enough, there came to my mind the preceding *sura* entitled 'the Afternoon——' "

" '*By the afternoon*—' " the deep voice of Mohamed Ali interrupted the tale, quoting—" '*by the afternoon, verily man employeth himself in that which will prove of loss; except those who believe, and do that which is right; and who mutually recommend the truth, and mutually recommend perseverance with each other.*' "

"*Aiwa*, Mohamed Ali. And there is much meat in few words. Wherefore I gathered heart and put my hand upon the floor, to rise again. Then my hand felt something, and I picked it up, and looked at it, and found it to be nothing more than the wooden hilt of a broken *kumiah*, with two inches of the broken blade's stump remaining in it. For a little while I sat looking at it, thinking that in return for my incomplete faith in Him, Allah had thus sent me an incomplete tool. But then also I remembered that all faith is necessarily incomplete because of the wonder and power of Allah—and that much may be accomplished even by the soul in which faith is but a tiny candle. Wherefore I considered the use of the implement which Allah had provided me.

"Carefully now I examined the walls, missing no inch of them. And presently I came upon a thing of interest, for on one of the cross walls I found that one of the stones had been worked with; the mortar had been scraped from around it to a depth of a hand's breadth. And lying in the bottom crevice was the remainder of my knife-blade. The story needed no words; without doubt death had interrupted the worker."

VI

"NOW it seemed to me that I could do no better than follow in the footsteps of my predecessor in this dungeon—although he might have known no more about what was on the other side of the wall than did I.

"Wherefore without delay I set about deepening the crevice, prying out the mortar piece by piece. All day I worked thus, while the little window grew brighter until a shaft of sunlight shot through, hurried across the floor and was extinguished—and my belly began to insist painfully that it be fed. In the increasing dusk I worked, and after it was quite dark, by the feel of the knife-blade and the mortar it bit into.

"At last there was no more mortar which my knife could reach; I had removed all that was possible. The matter was again in the hands of fate. If there remained only a little more, perhaps my strength would be sufficient to break the stone away from it. If there remained much—perhaps my strength would be sufficient to face with some self-control a death by starvation—or more probably from thirst. I felt that there would need to be indeed much mortar left to prevent me from wrenching the stone from its position.

"But now another thought came to me. What was on the other side of the stone? Could some one have heard the scraping of my knife-blade and be waiting until I should remove the stone—to laugh at my industry? Or had I excited myself merely to change my body to another tomb? Or what if the next room should be a part of the palace itself, with people occupying it? My scraping might not have been heard—but it would be a very different matter if a stone in a plastered wall were suddenly to go away.

"Thus I waited until hours had passed, and I knew that it was late at night. And even then I could not but perceive that if the room were occupied, my labor and my hope had been vain.

"But again came the belly-pain, and my tongue was dry as desert sand, so with no little of unthinking desperation and with less heed for results I got my fingers in the crevice beneath the stone and put forth my strength—until lights flashed before my eyes and there was the sound of bells in my head. When I could no longer hold my breath, nor continue the giving of strength, I let my arms slacken in a fury of despair—for I could not feel that the stone had moved even a hair's breadth.

"But as I laxed my muscles I felt—although almost I did not feel, so slight was the motion—that the stone moved downward a little. Then again I put forth my strength—and noted carefully when I released the stone. I had not been mistaken; I had raised the stone the thickness perhaps of a knife-blade—but so slowly, because of its weight and the clinging mortar, that I could not detect it. When I released it it fell back so quickly that my fingers felt its motion. Wherefore I was glad, for I knew that though many hours would be required to tear it loose, it was a thing possible for me. So I went at it, and some time during an endless night of labor and hunger and thirst—when the sweat ran down my face and into my mouth and added the curse of salt to my tongue—the stone came a little way forward in my hands. No light shone through the space it had occupied—but I heard voices.

VII

"WHEN I heard these voices, which were quite distinct, and still could see no light, I was puzzled for a space; then I bethought me that if this chanced to be a living-room of the palace the walls would very probably be hung with *haitis* or other coverings. This proved to be the case, for a closer investigation showed me innumerable pin-points of light in the texture of the hangings.

"You may be sure that I moved the stone no more just then, but instead strained my ears toward the conversation which was in progress in order to ascertain the nature of the room into which I had broken, the identities of those who now occupied it and the subject of their conference. It seemed to me that the hour was unduly late—or early—for honest men to be in conference—particularly as I was of the opinion that probably the only honest man about the palace was myself.

"Nor was I mistaken. Three minutes of eavesdropping told me all I needed to know. The room from the wall of which I had removed the stone was the sleeping-room of his Excellency Sid Achmed bou-Bekr, Basha of Azila. The man with whom the basha now held converse was that notorious rogue, El Madani. And the pleasant subject with which they played was treason to his Majesty the Sultan. Learning these things, my blood thrilled pleasantly as the blood of a youth who comes unexpectedly upon his sweetheart, and I thanked Allah in my heart for His graciousness in using me as His hand for the punishment of the unrighteous.

"It was a fair plan which they had made, the basha and the rogue—and one which, I may say, Mohamed Ali, would have added no particle to your favor with his Majesty.

" 'Assuredly it will appear as the work of that outlawed one, Mohamed Ali,' said the basha to the rogue, 'wherefore will your head be quite safe.'

" 'Never so safe as yours, if I know you,' made answer the rogue ungraciously.

" 'But the pay is more than your head is worth.'

"This from the basha.

" 'Assuredly Sid bou-Bekr knows the value of a head,' from the rogue.

" 'Enough then,' said the basha. 'I grow tired. Go you, now, and in the morning come you here again by the secret doorway. We will then arrange the necessary details—including the silver for your services.'

" 'You have it here?' " asked the rogue carelessly.

" 'In this very room,' " returned the basha.

"Thereupon the rogue went away, and the basha went to bed. As for me, I sat down to digest the situation, and to wait until the snores of the worthy basha should indicate that he had passed from treason to tranquillity.

" 'This,' I thought, 'is assuredly a sign of the favor of Allah.'

"True, Mohamed Ali, we have no great love for his Majesty the Sultan. But it is one thing for Mohamed Ali and his friends to oppose the unjust acts of the Commander of the Faithful and to evade the plots of his greedy followers, and quite another thing for every little rat of a basha to sit in his house at midnight and, with a worthless rogue, to cook up a bowlful of treason. To say nothing of planning to have Mohamed Ali looked upon as the cook. Wherefore, for the sake of Mohamed Ali, as well as for the sake of his Majesty Abd-ul-Aziz, I put the knife of my intelligence again against the grindstone of hunger. And after a little while the snores of the basha came to my ears."

VIII

"THE getting of that stone out of the wall silently was not work for a child. You will conceive that a stone big enough to leave a hole through which my shoulders could pass, was no pebble; and it seemed to me, moreover, that each time I drew it forward a finger's width, the whole palace shivered with the noise. But the basha's snores came without intermission—and at last the stone balanced on the edge of the one below it.

"I was weak as a child when at last it rested upon the floor. Perhaps I was weak from lack of food and drink, but when I held that stone in my arms it was as if I were Atlas upholding the world. However——

"Very carefully then, with my pistol no longer in its holster and my entangling *sulham* and slippers left in my prison house, and with both ears attentive to the basha's snores, I went through the opening in the wall head first, as was necessary. When I dropped upon the floor behind the curtain, as was also necessary, I lay for a little while as I fell, suppressing my breath and scarcely daring to think for fear the basha would hear. But he is a good sleeper, bou-Bekr; perhaps he was dreaming that he sat upon the Shareefian throne while his Majesty Mulai Abd-ul-Aziz waved a fly-fan over his august head. So he continued to sleep—until with one hand I poked the muzzle of my pistol in his ear and with the other choked off the snores, which had become unpleasant to me.

"Now Sid Achmed bou-Bekr may be a brave man when it comes to plotting treason and hiring a rogue to commit evil for which Mohamed Ali will be blamed—but he gave no evidence of bravery when he awakened with my hand on his throat. Wherefore I was tempted, in spite of the plan I had made, to kill him then and there. Because—I am afraid of no brave man; but of a coward, yes. And I knew that if my plan went wrong and bou-Bekr were still alive, the cowardice in him would make him thrice as dangerous to me as a brave man would be. I do not like to think of having paid assassins behind me on the road, nor to have my food seasoned with arsenic, or little matters like that. Wherefore I was tempted to kill. But then—I did not. And of my self-sacrifice Allah took due notice, and shortly brought about, in a more worthy manner, that which I desired.

"In short then I put a gag in bou-Bekr's mouth so that he might not screech like a hysterical woman when he got his breath, and I tied him hands and feet. After which I lighted a candle, made sure the doors were locked—and then consumed a vast amount of fruit which manifestly was intended for the basha's nourishment, should he become hungry during the night. But he did not seem to be hungry, and he assured me he was not, wherefore I ate it. It was excellent fruit! The most excellent fruit, I think, that I have ever eaten.

"Just as I was finishing the last apricot, there came a faint sound—so faint that now I think it must have been a premonition instead of a sound. Impelled by this premonition, quickly I extinguished the candle I had lighted, and waited. After a space there was another sound, the sound of a key being turned very, very slowly in a lock, and then a little current of cool air, which told me that the secret door—the door through which the basha's rogue had recently gone—was open. It became clear to me then that he who employs a rogue in his service were wise not to give the rogue a key to his bedroom. Also I thought of the money of which the basha had told the fellow a little while before."

IX

"THROUGH two windows, high up on the walls, a little star-dust drifted, so that the bulks of objects in the room could be seen faintly—as shadows upon shadows. From the spot where the opened door made a void of blackness, a shadow detached itself and moved like a black fantom to the basha's bed. There it paused and leaned forward—and although *it* might not know, *I* knew that bou-Bekr was staring with bulging, unbelieving eyes at this death which looked down upon him.

"Some little I have thought, my friends, since that moment, concerning the thoughts of bou-Bekr. In the first place, as I have said, he was a coward, wherefore he must have been horribly afraid. Besides which, his mind must have tried to function—to understand how and why this thing should have come to him swift upon the heels of my unexpected emergence from a living tomb. I suspect that he thought the two events were connected—that there was collusion between the rogue and myself. But whatever he may have thought, I am sure that he in no way suspected that he should continue to live even for a little while.

"Came a choked cry, and I could tell by another sound that the basha in a frenzy of terror had thrown himself away from the bending figure; that, bound as he was, some strength of fear had enabled him to roll over. Then I saw the shadow bend still farther toward him, heard a grunt of disdain, saw an uplifted arm—and I sprang. The basha, you see, was my prisoner. It was I and not the rogue whom he had ordered walled up to die of thirst and hunger, and I was in no wise inclined to permit another hand to steal my vengeance. Besides which—I would then have been no better off, or very little, at least, than I was before.

"I do not think the rogue would have been a formidable adversary under any conditions. Caught by surprize, it was child's play to throttle him. After which I relighted the candle, relocked the door and pondered the situation for a space. Obviously the plan I had in mind would not be furthered by having the bodies of dead men lying about the basha's sleeping-apartment. But the matter needed little thought, and so, while the basha watched me with wondering and terror-stricken eyes, I thrust the body of the rogue through the hole in the wall and let it fall into that six-sided box of stone which the basha had so cheerfully ordained to be my grave. Furthermore, feeling that the presence of the basha's money-bag had already caused enough trouble, I found that and dropped it also through the hole.

"This being done, and being satisfied that the basha was now past hysterics and ready to listen to words of wisdom, I removed the gag from his mouth; and, sitting upon the bed beside him, I first reproved him for his childish trust in men—and then gave him careful instructions as to those things which he was to bring about in the morning.

"It was not difficult to cause him to agree to my plan—because of which fact I was a trifle disturbed, and resolved to watch him very carefully indeed. As I have said, I have confidence in the word of a brave man, even though he is my enemy—but always I have fear of a coward, even though he be my friend.

"Then I slept."

X

"WHEN morning came I set about carrying out the plan which I had conceived would gain me my liberty and the discomfiture of our enemies. I have not told you that, when I had listened to the talk of the basha and the rogue on the previous night I had learned that the basha had sent his *Khalifa* upon a journey to Fez—the *Khalifa* being loyal to the Sultan, and hence an obstacle to his master's plans of the moment. Thus there was no *Khalifa* in charge of the executive end of the basha's affairs.

"Thus it came about that at the proper time the basha squatted in apparent comfort upon his cushions, and I summoned in attendance upon him, his scribe and the *kaid* who was in charge of the palace guards.

"Now although the basha appeared comfortable and more or less contented with the world, I do not think he was so. For, although I had removed the bonds from his ankles, the hands hidden by the folds of his *sulham* were still securely tied; and although his tongue was no longer obstructed by a rag, it was held silent by the knowledge that I, who sat beside him upon the cushions, held his death in my finger.

"For I had been very explicit with this basha, trusting him not in the least, because I knew him to be a coward. Some few words it required for me to convince him—he being what he was—that I did not particularly fear death so long as I would have his company on the road; but I did succeed at last in convincing him that the first wrong word from him would precisely coincide with his departure from a troubled world.

"Shortly then came his scribe and his captain, and salaamed before us. Neither of them did I like; Sid bou-Bekr manifestly placed confidence in men of his own character. Their eyes were shifty and I saw neither bravery nor loyalty in them. In the eyes of the scribe when he saw me I observed surprize and recognition. But I did not believe that bou-Bekr had published to the world the facts concerning the adjoining room. And I was somewhat amused also in watching the faces of these two henchmen when the basha spoke.

" 'There is an order to be given,' he said. 'He who sits beside me is Kaid Djillali, once a follower of the outlaw Mohamed Ali. Now, realizing his error and desiring to regain his standing among loyal subjects of his Majesty the Sultan, and also to work with us for the discomfiture of his former chief, he joins my household. For the present—during the absence of my *Khalifa*—Kaid Djillali will act in that capacity.

Wherefore—' the basha paused and swallowed, and I made a little movement of my hand beneath my *sulham*—'wherefore,' he finished, 'the orders of Kaid Djillali will be as my own. And moreover, as I do not feel at all well, I shall keep to my chambers for some time. I do not wish to be disturbed; my new *Khalifa* will deal with all matters, and with me.'

"I think that thereupon his scribe became a little suspicious. Perhaps the basha had business afoot of which I did not know. And perhaps also his orders too flatly contradicted such plans as were known to the scribe.

"'But, Sidi,' began the scribe, 'is it possible—?'

"'Is it possible that you question your master's orders!' I interrupted him. 'Or perhaps my ability to govern for your master. It appears, *sidi*—' I spoke now to the basha—'it appears that perhaps we might discover a scribe who better recognizes an order when he hears one.'

"Then both scribe and captain salaamed most humbly, and the basha dismissed them from the presence.

XI

"IN THIS manner then I became *Khalifa* of the town of Azila, and in my mind's eye I could see nothing to prevent my walking forth from the palace, mounting one of the basha's horses—and seeking out Mohamed Ali in the Riff.

"That my own escape was now assured I was certain—but although the basha's rogue was dead, there were a thousand other rogues within call—and the basha not only plotted treason against the Sultan, but planned to involve Mohamed Ali and Mohamed Ali's friends in his plotting. Wherefore, although I was somewhat tempted, it was very plain to me that I could not merely walk off and leave Sid bou-Bekr to set about his activities again. No; I decided to adhere to my original plan and to take this basha with me as a gift to Mohamed Ali. Yes, Mohamed Ali, I know that you would have enjoyed that.

"With this in mind I resolved first to exercise my perogatives as *Khalifa* for the time being. So, again tying the basha's feet and arranging it so that his mouth could not create a noise—and also with my pistol readily accessible—I locked the basha in his room and went into his offices to see what I might see. Upon every hand I was met with servility. Manifestly the scribe and the captain had advised caution and prompt obedience. When I asked to be shown the archives of the city, a pockmarked fellow showed me without delay where they were.

"I assure you that these archives were of extreme interest—more especially as I almost immediately found the private correspondence of his Excellency Sid bou-Bekr. I think, Mohamed Ali, that the two-score letters which I brought with me may be very useful to us in the future. It is surprizing the number of supposedly intelligent men who will put pen to paper for the purpose of getting themselves shot or beheaded.

"However, having abstracted from the basha's private correspondence such letters as I considered to be of value, I turned to the general archives, and there, among many things, I found a report, dated the preceding day, from the *kaid* in charge of the prison, and among the names were four of men whom I knew to be friends of ours. And one was your cousin, Mohamed Ali—or a second cousin.

"Now most assuredly, I said to myself, it is not proper that four friends of Mohamed Ali, including his cousin, should rot in the *casbah* of Azila; and still less proper would it be for me, Djillali, *Khalifa* of Azila, to permit such a thing. In consequence of which thought I ordered that a horse be brought at once for me, and shortly clattered off to the prison, followed by the Captain of the Guards—for I had no inclination to be shot by the prison guards in case they were unaware of my elevation to the *Khalifa*-ship.

"The list of prisoners I had read was a lengthy one—but, as I read, my sympathy had been aroused only by the names of those whom I knew. But now, looking into the miserable prison, dark and odorous, and seeing the captives huddled about like so many sick sheep, my heart was touched. Perhaps I am a sentimental fool at times—but at any rate I concealed my sympathy from myself by the thought that there might be other friends of ours among them—men whom I did not know. And as a result of this thought I resolved to liberate them all.

"I do not wonder that the captain was surprized—but I *do* wonder that he should have tried to prevent my act. For when the stupid guard opened the door at my command, and I ordered all the prisoners to come forth, the captain expostulated. And when I told them all they were free to seek their homes—most expeditiously—the captain made the error of countermanding my order and drawing his sword in an attempt to drive them back into their prison.

"But he was not injured—neither he nor the stupid guard, who had a rifle which would not shoot. Only the prisoners, at my request, carried them both into the prison and locked the door upon them. After which there was a great scattering for the city gates.

"Then I returned to the palace speedily, for upon me had come the feeling that danger threatened.

XII

"NOW my tale rides to a swift conclusion.

"The nearer I drew to the palace the stronger became the presentiment of impending danger. And I lost no time in going to the basha's chamber. The scribe was standing at the door, and I heard the basha speaking.

"This situation was not at all in accord with my fancy, but it was one in which immediate action was necessary. Wherefore I put my pistol against the scribe's ribs, unlocked the door, swung it open and thrust him ahead of me into the room.

"There another surprize awaited me, for as I stepped from behind the scribe, I saw that the cushions whereupon I had left the basha no longer upheld him. Before I could do more than realize that in some way the basha had escaped his bonds, he threw himself upon me from behind the door, and at the same moment the scribe turned upon me with his *kumiah* drawn. Instinctively my hand squeezed the pistol within it. Its voice was almost silenced by the folds of the scribe's *sulham*, but its word was spoken, and the scribe fell at my feet.

"It required little effort to unclasp the arms of the basha, to tear his hands from my throat. While I held him, panting from his exertions, I listened for the sound of racing slippers, fearing that the noise of the shot, subdued though it was, would bring the palace guards. But none came. Then I closed the door and once more paid attention to the now terrified basha. Very much I began to realize that every hour in the palace was for me sixty minutes of danger—and by the help of Allah having reached a point where escape was possible, I had little inclination to strain my good fortune much more. Wherefore that which I had to tell the basha was concise and, I think, convincing.

"We left the scribe where he lay; and, locking the door behind us, we went forth. The basha led the way—and I believe as he went he repeated the phrase I had ordered him to repeat and keep repeating—

" 'Death walks behind.'

"We found horses in readiness at the palace entrance, and we mounted and rode off. All went well until we reached the northern gate. There, as you know, is a small guardhouse, where perhaps a dozen of the city guards are stationed. As we drew near, the *kaid* in charge recognized bou-Bekr, and, as is customary, his men turned out and stood with their rifles at salute.

" 'Death is behind,' I reminded the basha."

XIII

"I THINK that we would have passed the line of armed men without an indiscreet word from the basha, even then. But as we drew opposite the *kaid* and acknowledged his salute, there came the pounding of horses' feet down the street behind; and, looking back, I saw the captain of the palace guards with half a dozen men racing madly toward us. Also he was shouting, although his words were not yet distinct. Manifestly there was a key to the prison besides the one which lay in my *shakarah*.

"I can not even now explain why the basha made his sad mistake. Perhaps he thought that the odds were overwhelmingly against me—as they were. Perhaps he did not know that I am esteemed an excellent pistol shot. And perhaps he was merely swept suddenly by an ungovernable panic.

"However that may be, he chose this moment to rein his horse so it reared, to swing it toward me as if to protect himself and to shout to the guards that they should shoot me. He might well have known—as perhaps he realized in the two heart-beats that he lived thereafter—that the suddenness and unexpectedness of his action would paralyze for a moment both the minds and bodies of the guards.

"I fired while his horse was yet in the air. He rolled from his saddle, and my horse cleared his body with a great leap. The rifles of the guard were leveled as I reached the gate, and the bullets from the volley covered me with dust from the walls of the twenty-foot passage-way.

"As I struck open country I looked back. The guard had rushed madly to the gate, thereby blocking off from immediate passage the captain of the palace guards and his horsemen. Thus by the grace of Allah I had a good two minutes' start. One would have been sufficient, for I am no mean judge of horseflesh, and the horse I rode I had chosen with care.

"And thus— That is all. A short pursuit punctuated by ineffectual pistol-shots; half a day's leisurely travel—and once again, by the grace of Allah, I greet my chief and clasp the hands of my friends."

"Praise be to Allah, the All-Powerful," offered Mohamed Ali.

"*Allah akbar*," confirmed the others.

WHOSE COMMAND?

A Complete Novelette by Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Baby Depth Bombs," "Over the Hump," etc.

WHEN the big Navy tug *Saraso's* crew of thirty bluejackets got it into their heads that they had a growl coming, they could make more noise than a zoo full of hungry bears. And on that gray, blusterous Saturday morning they thought they rated a growl. A trip out to Fog Rock meant no liberty this Saturday afternoon. More than that. Outside of Felgo Bay the Pacific was wild with weather, and the *Saraso* was anything but a comfortable boat even in a moderate sea.

Not for long did they growl, however. When two pharmacist's mates from the Naval hospital came aboard carrying a stretcher, the purpose of the trip became apparent. The *Saraso's* malcontents then learned that they were going out to get a sick man—one of the radio-operators on Fog Rock.

"Oh," they said, "that's different." Their skipper hadn't told them that. They closed up—with one exception.

The exception was the skipper—Boatswain Giltz. He was of that breed that can't stop growling, once started. And it took very little to start him. In fact rarely did he need any starting. He seldom did anything *but* growl, waking or sleeping.

Giltz was not a warrant-officer as a result of distinguished service or bravery or even

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efficiency. He owed his rise to *time.* In his gob days he had been a master-at-arms, or "jimmy-legs"—ship's policeman—the most useless, unnecessary being aboard ship. All he had ever done that any one could remember was to get himself hated and despised and laughed at, for he was mean and yellow and funny.

He was funny to look at—but of course it wasn't his fault that he had a long crooked face and fishy eyes. He was funnier still to observe from the side-lines. He was never funnier than when telling one of his men he would "kick a lung" out of him. Nothing could be more laughable, for Giltz was so frail of frame that he appeared ever in peril of being wafted away by a puff of wind. A hale boy of fifteen could have broken him in half.

Of course, Boatswain Giltz could see nothing funny in himself. His men never laughed at him—to his face. Always respectful, they listened to his snarling with straight faces, and, when he finished, walked away—cowed, he thought. He never paused to analyze. Not for a fleeting second would he allow himself to even fancy that it was the gold on his cap, his authority, that kept their faces straight. No; it was nothing more nor less than the sheer weight of his tremendous personality, he assured himself. He was a born handler of men.

That morning, shortly after receiving the order to go out to Fog Rock, Giltz set out to "handle" the commandant of the Naval station at Felgo, from whom the order had issued.

"Keep fast those lines!" he bellowed to his deck-hands, as he started up the wharf. And to the machinist's mate on watch:

"Hold your fires till I get back! I'm —— if they're gonna chase me out in a storm with no wireless-operator aboard!"

There was his point. The *Saraso's* only radio-operator was on furlough. It was contrary to regulations to put to sea without a radio-operator. He had the commandant by the neck. But——

"Regulations!"

The voice of the commandant—who was a rear-admiral—shook the office walls—Giltz's knees too.

"Regulations! There's a man out on Fog Rock to be brought in to the hospital for an operation! Go out and get him!"

"Aye-aye-aye-aye, sir. Y-y-y-yes, sir," stuttered Giltz.

He paused a moment, then pulled himself together, for he had another point.

"But, admiral, with a heavy south'ard sea running, can we *land* out there? Fog Rock's only got one landing-place, sir—a small cove with a narrow opening facing north, sir, right into the blow. How'll we get that man on board, sir? Can't drop a boat, sir; she'd swamp in a second. Only chance is to put the tug into the cove, and that's gonna be hazardous work, sir, in this weather—narrow opening—heavy backwash——"

"Go out to Fog Rock!"

The commandant stood up, whiskers bristling. The two yeomen in the office looked at each other and grinned. Giltz paled.

"Go out and get that man if you can! Go out and try! Go!"

ALL the way across Felgo Bay Giltz spat venom against the wheel-house window and into the ear of the quartermaster at the wheel. He damned everybody in the Navy up to and including the secretary. He hoped the commandant would choke on his next drink of water. Yes, and the same for "that —— gunner," the commanding officer of the Fog Rock radio station—the man responsible for this trip. As for the sick man on the rock, he had "no —— right to be sick" in such weather as this.

The quartermaster listened with a straight face—when Giltz was looking—filling up Giltz's momentary pauses with "Sure," "You said it, captain," "I'll say so." In the six months Giltz had been in command of the *Saraso*, he, Quartermaster Poots, had learned that the easiest way to get along with him was to humor him.

But once over the bar and heading out into the wild, billowy Pacific, Giltz ceased raving. Heavy weather always took the starch out of him. He became very sick. Not seasick—he had been going to sea too many years for that. His sickness was of a different nature. He grew sick with fright the minute the *Saraso* commenced rolling; sick with the dread of her turning over. Seared in his brain was the conviction that she was top-heavy. That was his bosom terror; and every time she went to sea in a heavy blow it grew stronger, more dominating. He died every time she lay over.

And how she did lay over that morning! A gale swept down from the north driving mountains of water before it. Heading for Fog Rock, which lay forty miles west, the *Saraso* had the whole furious onslaught on her starboard side. She was lifted, hurled, heeled over, stood up. With every crashing plunge of her heavy bows she dipped up tons and tons of water. She rose at times till she all but threw a backward somersault. She dropped into yawning valleys, heeling over till her port life-boat, hanging from its davits on the topside, was awash. She was like a bottle in a cataract.

But the *Saraso* was a doughty little fighter. And, with the one exception, the same should be said of her crew. They were all old-timers in the Navy, sailors to their hair-ends. To them the heave and stress of the sea's wild elements was all a part of the game. They feared nothing, worried about nothing. With the exception of the big tug's fish-eyed skipper, there wasn't a yellow streak on her drunken decks.

"She's top-heavy! she's top-heavy!" Giltz was wailing, not five minutes after crossing the bar.

Face white, eyes wide with terror, he had one arm around the port speed-annunciator and a death grip on the handle. Poots, bracing himself at the wheel, turned a grin on him.

"No she ain't, sir. I seen 'er come through worse than this."

"You keep your trap shut!" Giltz snapped at him. "I know a top-heavy ship when I——"

His heart—assuming he had one—jumped up to his throat and choked off the sentence. At that moment she lay over—over and over. Through the wheel-house window Giltz looked down, down into the sea. He saw it rising toward him. It was black and deep and awful. His blood curdled and his spine froze with the fright of it. It wanted him; it was reaching for him! She was going right on over! Nothing could stop her! To Giltz, it seemed that all that was Giltz was about to pop out of Giltz's eyes. She'd swamp! But no. She rolled fifty degrees, hung at that angle for what seemed about an hour to Giltz, then started back. He breathed again.

"That's 'er limit, sir," grinned Poots. "She'll do just fifty degrees an' no more. She'll run along all day on that angle; an' all the typhoons and cyclones that ever was or will be can't push 'er over."

Giltz shot him a fishy glare.

"How are you headin'?"

"Dead west, sir. Steady on."

"Bring 'er over two points."

"South or north, sir?"

"Where the —— do you think we're headin' for, Honolulu?" Giltz was recovering his wind.

"No, sir. Fog Rock, I thought. That's west."

"Now don't get fresh! Two points north. Come on, come on! Do you want to swamp!"

Poots grinned and spun the wheel.

"West-nor'west, sir," he said when she came around.

Giltz grunted. His idea was to point her into the heavy running sea, which was far less perilous than running in the trough of it. The trip would take much longer—he would fetch up far to the north of Fog Rock, then have to turn and run south ahead of the sea—but it would be playing safe. Anything was better than taking a chance on turning over, swamping, being sucked down with the ship.

"Another two points," he growled.

Poots had expected that—Giltz always did things gradually. Again he spun the wheel.

"Steady on nor'west, sir."

Poots uttered it in a tone of sarcasm, giving his skipper a downward, sidelong leer of contempt. Giltz didn't like the man's attitude, but only glowered at him. But when, a moment later, the tar grumbled that he'd had hopes of getting back to Felgo before midnight, Giltz blew up.

"Get the —— out of here!"

With which he lurched over and elbowed the quartermaster away from the wheel, manning it himself.

"Send Murray up! Murray, I said! Don't grin at me, you monkey! I'll kick a lung out o' you! Get!"

Within five minutes Murray staggered up and took the wheel. He lasted fifteen seconds. It might have been design on Murray's part—for he was a keen-witted little tar. As he took the wheel Giltz told him the course was northwest. Murray looked at him in blank surprize.

"I thought we were going to Fog Rock, sir!"

Giltz fixed him with his fishy eyes, till he thought he perceived an ever so faint inclination to grin; then:

"Get the —— out of here! Don't grin at me, you —— monkey! I'll courtmartial—I'll kick a lung—get out o' here! Send Riker up!"

Riker lasted fifteen minutes. He too got the rush, along with the promise of a general court martial.

All three of his quartermasters having been batted out of the box, Giltz now began drawing from his deck force. Seaman after seaman he summoned and chased. One after another they came, took the wheel, listened to his wails and snarls till patience gave out, then, with some insolent sarcasm or other, got themselves abusively dismissed.

At two o'clock that afternoon, when the *Saraso* swung about and headed southwest for Fog Rock, Giltz was at the wheel himself. He had driven his last available helmsman out of the wheel-house. He had promised no less than twelve general courts martial. Also it was by then pretty well understood that the entire crew were to be disrated as soon as the ship got back to Felgo.

LATE afternoon found the *Saraso* hove to off Fog Rock. This was a gigantic black pyramid, roughly, two miles in circumference at its base, and whose peak, on which was the lighthouse, pointed into the sky at an altitude of over a thousand feet. Scattered round its base were a score of small buildings—the homes of the lighthouse men, and the quarters and outbuildings of the Naval radio station.

Looking at it from seaward Fog Rock was anything but attractive as a place to live. It looked bleak, lonesome and utterly devoid of life. Yet life ran wild and rampant on and around it. There were countless wild rabbits of every conceivable combination of white, black and brown. These owed their sustenance to the myriad seagulls, which were thicker on the rock than mosquitoes in a swamp; but for these birds there wouldn't have been sufficient vegetation on the rock to feed a mouse. Sea-lions, or brown seals, swarmed the low ledges and coves. There were five hundred chickens, ducks and geese, owned by the radio mess, running wild over the island. There was plenty of life and action on the rock for any one who enjoyed shooting, fishing and running wild.

As to the social end of it, there were eight Navy tars and ten lighthouse men with their families—there was always some one to talk to, play tricks on, or fight with.

On the rock's northeastern shore was a cove, an inlet four hundred feet long by eighty feet wide, and closed in by walls of rock one hundred feet high. At the head of this cove was the landing—Fog Rock's only landing. There was water enough in this cove to float a big ship at low tide; but located as it was, with its opening toward the northern quadrant, whence came nearly all the storms, it was a perilous entrance in rough weather. There was no lee landing. The rock had no lee shore, as it terminated in a point on the south. Hence, when the elemental furies were running wild Fog Rock folk had to wait for their provisions.

Giltz had no intention of attempting that entrance. Not for all the rear-admirals in the navy would he point her into that crack! Why, it would be suicide! With this sea beating in, she'd get caught inside there, twisted around and smashed against the rocks like a thing of glass! Sick man? He didn't care if there were twenty sick men—or dead men! He, Boatswain Giltz, was alive, and going to stay that way!

After heaving to three hundred yards off, with both propellers—she was twin-screw—turning over to hold her up to the drive of the sea, he stepped out of the wheel-house and shouted over the topside rail for Murray and Poots to "Get the —— up here!"

"You!" he snarled to Murray, "get in at that wheel and use what little brains you got toward keepin' 'er head on! Don't let 'er drift in. Use your engines."

And to Poots:

"You get your useless hooks on a pair of semaphore-flags, and stand by to signal those dubs on the beach. Bear a hand now, or I'll kick a lung—come on, come on! Jump!"

Giltz then turned and trained his binoculars on the high bluff overhanging the right of the cove's entrance, near the brink of which stood a group of Navy men. Two of these, both head-and-shoulders taller than the rest, stood well to the front. They wore rubber coats and their faces were partly covered by sou'westers, but Giltz recognized them, one as the gunner, the commanding officer of the radio station, or "Blackie," as gobs called him, the other as

"Graveyard" Wilton, a chief electrician. Graveyard was waving a pair of semaphore flags, Blackie training a pair of binoculars on the tug.

"Tell them the hospital was short-handed," Giltz growled, when Poots came with his semaphore-flags. "Tell them we've got no doctor aboard. Ask them what's the dope."

When Poots had semaphored this, the man on the bluff replied:

> Yes, we know. Commandant informed us by radio. We have a very sick man, is the dope. Appendicitis case, we think. Has been doubled up for twenty-four hours suffering intense pain. Can you enter cove?

Giltz lowered his glasses, and for a few moments cursed into the wind and spray, the while glaring murderously at the two men on the bluff. Finally he leaned over and yelled into Poots's ear:

"Ask those nuts how they're gonna get their man aboard if I do get inside. Can't tie up, or anchor in there. It's just as rough in there as it is out here."

To this Graveyard replied:

> We have a steam-winch we use for hoisting stores up from landing. Can lower sick man on stretcher—suspend over middle of cove. Bring tug in—run forecastle under stretcher. Then we lower away and you grab.

At this Giltz exploded.

"The backwash! the backwash!" he roared in Poots' ear. "Ask those —— fools how about the backwash! Suppose I did get inside—how in the-e —— would I hold 'er straight! Suppose I snap off my rudder! Suppose I smash 'er on the rocks! Suppose I draw a general court martial for hazarding my ship! Ask them who in the-e —— they think they are! Ask them ——"

"Wait a minute, sir!"

Poots was swamped.

"I can't send semaphore as fast as you can talk, sir!"

"I know, I know. There's a —— of a lot o' things you can't do. You're worse than——"

"What's after 'backwash'?" Poots broke in.

Giltz only glowered at him.

"After 'backwash', sir?" Poots repeated. "I only got as far as, 'Afraid of backwash'."

"Afraid!" Giltz shrieked it. "Afraid! Who in the-e —— said afraid! Afraid!"

"You said somethin' about the backwash smashin' us on the rocks—or takin' off our rudder——"

"Shut your trap!"

In Giltz's eyes was the look of an infuriated bull. "I got a —— good mind to kick a lung out o' you!"

Poots had reached his limit in this matter of lung-kicking. It was coming too often. He dropped his flags and squared away. His voice rose above the wail and hiss of wind and spindrift.

"Captain, the sooner you get this in your head the better! Kickin' a lung outa me is a *man's* job. An' any time you think you're big enough for it, just jump right in, sir!"

Giltz stared in mute, far-away amazement. Gripping the rail with one hand he rocked and swayed with the ship's drunken motion as one stupefied. He could not believe what he saw and heard. A lowly quartermaster insulting a boatswain! Why, the insolent puppy was flinging his challenge right into his teeth! It was a thing unheard of, inconceivable. Not once in his six years as a warrant-officer had Giltz seen the like of it. He felt that he must do something, say something—but what?

"Do you realize," he finally stammered, "what it means to insult an officer—the commanding officer? Do you p-oo-ey!"

He broke off, as a sheet of cold spray swept over and drenched him.

They stood glaring at each other, each with one hand on the rail, looking like two half-drowned tom-cats. Oh, how Boatswain Giltz did want to sail in and make good his bluff! At that moment he would have given much for the courage to let drive at those eyes, those snappy eyes that glinted so invitingly and contemptuously. If only he had the guts! And then, to make matters worse, Poots added:

"An' don't think, sir, that I'd ever put up a holler if you cleaned up on me. There won't be any trouble come of it—from me. Just hop right in, sir."

That was kicking the props from under a man. It left Giltz nothing to do but sail in or back water.

"Do you realize that I can send you over the road for this?"

But his tone was so feeble that it was drowned in the overhead roar. Poots scowled at him, then picked up his flags and again faced the two men on the bluff.

"What's after 'backwash'," he repeated.

"That sick man over there is more important than our argument."

Meanwhile, over on the bluff Gunner Blackie held his binoculars to his eyes and waited patiently, while Graveyard Wilton, the chief electrician beside him, growled violently. In their loose rubber coats and sou'westers they looked of about the same size and proportions. But aside from being tall, they were as unlike physically as two men could be. Blackie was broad, of faultless proportions and powerfully muscled, while Graveyard was as lean and bony as a hungry wolf. Strong-featured, dark, black-eyed, Blackie was a handsome young he; Graveyard had a face that made dogs run away from him; "the ugliest face on the west coast"—his own boast. That face, of course, made Graveyard none the less a good shipmate.

Close behind them stood a group of four tars—three radio-operators and a ship's cook. These all wore anxious faces, and strained forward to catch what passed between the "skipper" and the "executive officer," as Blackie and Graveyard were facetiously dubbed. Farther behind, back near where the bluff overlooked the head of the cove, was another, much larger group, of men, women and children—lighthouse people. These too all wore solicitous expressions on their faces.

Every mind on the rock was centered on "Goat" Perkins, a radio-operator first-class. Late in the afternoon of the day before Goat had gone down with an acute pain in his side. For twenty-four hours he had been groaning and writhing in agony, doubled up like a jack-knife and unable to straighten out.

The most worried soul on the rock was Graveyard Wilton. Graveyard thought more of Goat Perkins than many a man does of his brother. He suffered more than Goat did. But what worried Graveyard most of all was the sight of that skipper out there on the tug. He knew Giltz. That's why he was growling violently.

"Fine chance we've got of getting Goat to the hospital if it's up to that bird to take a chance! I know that bird. He wouldn't take a chance to save his mother!"

Graveyard had to lean over and shout this into Blackie's ear, so deafening was the shriek and roar about them. The wind howled and whistled through the crevices and crannies along the jutting cliffs, and the gigantic pyramid towering in the background threw back a totality of sound that was maddening. It sounded as if a hundred or so locomotives were screeching at once. And from below came the thunderous boom of the sea against the rocks, mingled with the deep, sustained grunts and groans of a horde of sea-lions that basked on the ledges and sported in the tumbling, raging foam.

They watched the *Saraso* pitch and toss. Like a thing of cork she rose and fell, hurdling each mountainous ridge of water with all the grimness and gameness and seeming love of it of a baby battle-ship. Aft on her diminutive quarter-deck were huddled her sturdy crew, barefooted, trousers rolled above their knees, some in oilskins, some with only trousers on, some in underwear, some naked—but all taking the icy surges that swept over them with grins on their faces.

"Best little ship and the best gang of flat-feet on the west coast," asserted Graveyard. "But her skipper's got a streak that reaches down to his toes. I know Giltz. I was shipmates with him when he was a jimmy-legs. If he stood up against a yellow-painted house you couldn't see him."

"He looks it," observed Blackie, laughing. "I don't know him—but I do know the ship. And she's all you say she is. At least she used to be. I was on her five years ago, out in the Asiatics. She was the best little home in the outfit then."

One of the lighthouse men stepped up and roared in Blackie's ear:

"Say, old hoss, steam's up on the winch. She's sizzlin'—any time you're ready."

"All right, Billy," Blackie replied, and Billy returned to the small shed on the bluff at the head of the cove, in which was the donkey-engine used for running the winch, when hoisting stores up from the landing.

"They're still calling each other names," Blackie went on to Graveyard.

By "they" he meant Giltz and Poots.

"—— it, gunner," Graveyard broke out, "we've got to get Goat to the hospital! It'll be dark in a half-hour!"

"That's not worrying Giltz a bit," Blackie smiled through his binoculars. "He's still throwing eye-fire at his quartermaster."

He laughed.

"They just got a cold shower. Maybe that'll cool 'em off."

"I tell you, gunner, we'll never get Goat to the hospital tonight if it's up to Giltz to take a chance."

"Chance! Why, man, she's a twin-screw tug. An eighty-foot opening——"

Blackie stopped. Poots was sending again. The group behind the gunner strained to read the message, but without glasses only a letter here and there could be made out, for the air was thick with flying spray and daylight was fading fast. At high tension they waited till Blackie lowered his binoculars.

"Give him O. K.," he said to Graveyard. "He says to hook on our sick man and lower away. He'll try to enter the cove."

With which Blackie turned to the rest and began issuing orders in his slow, easy way, accompanying them with slaps on the backs—an astonishingly good way to get results!

" 'Simple'—you're the best seaman in the gang—beat it to the quarters, get some rope and rig a bridle of some sort on that stretcher. Rig it so she'll lower away over the cove—on even keel, get me? You know how."

Simple went galloping toward the head of the cove, where terminated a path which led over a rise and down to the radio station on the other side.

" 'Smoky'—" Blackie went on—"you, 'Salvation' and 'Beans' bundle Goat up in blankets and lay him out nice on the stretcher—lift him out of bed, mattress and all. Make him good and fast to it. Then cover him over with oilskins and bring him out here. Handle him easy. Don't forget, mattress and all. See if you can overhaul Simple.

"But wait," he checked them. "On your way out bring a half-dozen loaded rifles."

Graveyard and Blackie then walked slowly back toward the group at the head of the cove.

"He'll *try*, eh?" Graveyard's teeth showed and his eyes glittered knowingly. "Oh yes, he'll try. Watch and see."

He threw out his arms in a sweeping gesture, thus calling Blackie's attention to the fast failing daylight.

"He won't have long to try. Watch him. He'll jockey around out there pretending to try till dark—then turn tail and sneak for Felgo. I know that bird."

They joined the group of lighthouse folk. For several minutes they were kept busy answering questions. There was much of gabble and chatter. Finally Blackie singled out one Pete Delmar, a small, wiry, hawk-faced, sharp-eyed fellow of middle age, and drew him aside.

"Say, Pete," said the gunner, "I've got some rifles coming out. Have you got your eagle-eye with you today?"

The lighthouse man looked him up and down, spat impressively, then answered:

"Always got it with me. Never yet seen the day I couldn't sink a nail as fur as I could see it."

"You're the right man in the right place," Blackie returned. "Come on. We need a sharpshooter."

With a hand at each of their elbows Blackie led Graveyard and Pete over toward the donkey-engine shed. On the way the gunner unfolded what lay at the back of his head. They stood outside the shed for five minutes, talking. Then Pete walked away, and Blackie and Graveyard entered the shed. Billy Whorton, busy over his donkey engine, looked up and said—

"I'm ready any time you are."

"Pretty soon," replied Blackie. "Say, Billy, keep the women and kids out of here for a few minutes, will you?"

And while Billy stood guard in the doorway, Blackie and Graveyard undressed. They stripped down to bare poles. Then they pulled on their boots, rubber coats and sou'westers.

"What are yu'se gonna do?" inquired Billy.

"Send Goat Perkins to the hospital on that ship," Graveyard answered.

WHEN all was ready—the stretcher with Goat Perkins bundled up and lashed to it, hooked on to the winch-hoist, ready to run out and lower away—Graveyard and Blackie returned to their point of observation out on the bluff, and signaled the tug to "Come ahead."

"We won't pull this unless he makes it necessary," Blackie said.

"He'll do that," Graveyard shot back.

They saw Giltz lurch along the topside rail and enter the wheel-house. There was a commotion of water under the *Saraso's* stern, as her two screws began churning. She went ahead, swung about and pointed for the cove. A long ridge of water rose across her wake; the next moment she was on the crest of it, riding in like a Hawaiian surf-board.

Blackie held his glasses trained on Giltz, through the wheel-house window. Suddenly he broke into a laugh.

"Giltz almost broke himself in half ringing up full speed astern," he explained a moment later. "He looks like a ghost."

A hundred yards off the entrance the *Saraso* stopped. For a few seconds she lay dead in the water, high up on the wave's crest, her backing propellers churning up white, frothy foam. Then she dived, stern foremost, into a deep hollow astern of her and commenced backing slowly away.

Graveyard nudged Blackie.

"What did I tell you?"

"Wait a minute; let's not condemn the man too soon."

"But it's getting dark, gunner!"

"I know, but fair is fair."

They waited and watched. The *Saraso* backed off a way and stopped. Then ever so slowly, Giltz began working her in, or better, to let the sea work her in, holding her straight, stern foremost to it, and compensating the push of the sea by "juggling the engines," that is, by alternate reversals and changes of speed. Again he brought her in to within one hundred yards. And there he held her.

They waited five minutes; she came no nearer.

"What do you say, gunner?" Graveyard broke out.

Without replying Blackie turned away. He walked back to the head of the cove, where he bent over the lad on the stretcher, which rested with its ends on two barrels.

"Well, Goat, old boy," he said, "I want to shake you so-long and wish you luck. We'll hold your job open till you get out of the hospital. Hope they don't leave any knives or saws or axes inside of you."

Goat grinned and stuck up a hand out of the blankets.

"Thanks, gunner. An' thanks for all the other things you done for me. You been a prince to me, sir, an' I won't forget it. Is the tug comin' in?"

"In about ten minutes," Blackie answered. "And here——"

He pressed a small piece of folded paper into Goat's hand.

"Give this to Boatswain Giltz, skipper of the *Saraso*, some time on the way in."

Blackie then picked up the six rifles which Salvation and Beans had fetched from the quarters, nodded Pete Delmar to follow, and rejoined Graveyard out on the bluff. Pete took a seat on a small jutting ledge on the brink, with one rifle across his lap and the other five in a row beside him.

"To —— with that stuff!" Graveyard was growling, his glaring eyes on the tug. "I tell you, gunner, he's only sparring for time. Look at him! Back aft with his deck-hands, rigging in the port life-boat! That'll take fifteen minutes! Then the starboard boat—another fifteen! By then it'll be dark, and he'll sneak for Felgo! What do you *say*, gunner?"

"Wait."

Blackie's eyes were fixed on the starboard wheel-house door, in which stood little Murray, the quartermaster. Murray was waving his arms to attract their attention. Giltz, busy with his deck-hands rigging in the life-boat aft on the port side, couldn't see him. Blackie waved.

Murray semaphored:

> Say, fellows, this bird is only killing time on you. He's waiting for dark. He's afraid to enter.

Blackie raised his glasses, trained them on the group at the life-boat aft, singled out Giltz, noted that his back was turned. Then—

"Tell him we're coming aboard," he said, "and ask him if he'll give her a kick ahead."

Graveyard sent it quickly. Murray spelled out "Will try," then stepped back into the wheel-house.

Blackie then shouted to Pete Delmar—

"Well, Pete, we're depending on your eagle-eye."

Pete replied by pointing his rifle down on the water. Looking down Graveyard and Blackie saw the head of a huge sea-lion a short distance offshore. Pete fired. The animal kicked up a momentary commotion of water, then disappeared.

"You're a hoss, Pete," applauded Blackie.

He and Graveyard then walked back about thirty feet from the brink.

"Graveyard," laughed Blackie, "you were the first man I ever saw dive from a ship's yard-arm. And I never was satisfied till I could pull the stunt myself."

They kicked off their boots and dropped their rubber coats and sou'westers to the ground. Then side by side they trotted to the brink of the bluff and over.

FOR a few moments Murray was a busy tar. When he saw the two naked men come leaping over the bluff, the little quartermaster bolted through the starboard door and out to the rail.

"Over a hundred feet!" he gasped.

He scanned the water inshore. For a full minute he saw nothing but the foamy, tumbling breakers. Then black specks appeared. But he saw, not two, but a dozen—a score of heads! Heads and heads. The water was alive with heads! Murray spat forth an oath. They had jumped right into a swarm of sea-lions!

Unable to hear the incessant barking of Pete Delmar's rifle, Murray expected to witness the unsightly tearing to pieces of Graveyard and Blackie. The curdling yelps and howls he heard certainly suggested something like a battle royal. He knew very little of sea-lions. Some said they were harmless if unmolested. Again, he had heard they were inquisitive, playful creatures—yes; he'd heard of an instance in which they had killed a man in the water by playfully butting, cuffing and nipping. And then it flashed to Murray that he had better "give 'er that kick ahead."

He dashed back into the wheel-house. Both engines were backing at half-speed, giving just thrust enough to breast the drive of the sea, and hold her dead in the water, a hundred yards off shore. Murray rang up *stop* on both annunciators, then jumped back to the starboard door.

He saw them now. A pair of heads and arms, close together, rose to the summit of a white surge of water, about seventy-five yards inshore. Just a fleeting glimpse it was. He blinked and they were gone, swallowed. Seconds passed. Again he saw them, much nearer—but now he had to leap back to his post, for the *Saraso* was racing toward black rock and destruction on the crest of a mountainous comber.

Reaching out right and left Murray jerked both annunciator handles back to *full speed astern*. For a few moments he felt ice in his spine, for the bluff on the left of the entrance now loomed up black and frowning a scant forty yards ahead. In the few seconds her engines were stopped the sea had pushed her in a good sixty yards. A moment later, however, he was grinning, for she answered, met it, held fast, dead in the water. And then, on a dead gallop, in came Giltz.

"What the —— are you doin' with those engines! I told you to keep 'er off! keep 'er off!"

"She ain't hit nothin' yet, sir," Murray retorted, reaching out and ringing up *one-third astern*.

"Take your paws off those handles!" Giltz bellowed, pushing him away from the wheel. "I'll kick a lung—get out o' here!"

Murray got. From outside the door he shouted back—

"Say, captain, there's a couple o' men in the water."

In the act of ringing for full speed astern Giltz paused, turned, then lurched through the starboard door and out to the rail. In the water a short distance away he saw the heads of Graveyard and Blackie. He looked around for Murray, but just caught a glimpse of the quartermaster's head as he disappeared down the 'midship ladder. So back into the wheel-house he ran, and poked his head out the port door.

"Aft, there!" he roared to the deck-hands about the life-boat. "Get the —— away from that boat! Get below, the whole —— gang of you, and heave a couple o' lines to those two nuts in the water!"

WHILE Blackie and Graveyard were being helped over the rail by the men below, Giltz occupied himself at the wheel and annunciator. With the port engine backing at two-thirds speed, and the starboard at one-third, she seemed to hold straight, and just meet the drive of the sea, which was on her starboard quarter. And thus assured—satisfied that she wouldn't, for the moment at least, swing around in the trough and be *turned over*—the skipper stepped out of the wheel-house. He met the two naked men at the rail.

"Hello, skipper," Blackie greeted, through teeth that rattled like dice.

Graveyard only nodded. Both were shivering and blue with cold.

"What is this, an official call?" Giltz grinned, looking them up and down as if it gave him pleasure to see them suffering.

"Well, not exactly," Blackie chattered. "But say, skipper, we're cold. Any heat in your cabin?"

Giltz gave them a grinning glare each, then lowered his eyes. These fools, he supposed, thought they could persuade him to enter that cove. They wanted to talk, eh? Very well. Every minute brought darkness nearer. His grin broadened, as he looked up into the murky overhead and saw the powerful search-light on the peak of the pyramid a thousand feet above—Fog Rock Light—shoot forth its long white ray. Fine! He would entertain these wild fools for twenty minutes or so; by then it would be dark. And grinning apishly he led them into his cabin, which adjoined the wheel-house. So tickled was he that he forgot he had chased Murray—that there was no one at the wheel.

Entering last Graveyard, as he closed the door, transferred the key from the inside to the outside keyhole.

It was not much of a cabin, being only a cuddy, fifteen feet square. A bunk, a large desk, a small, round table, a teak dresser, and two chairs left bare standing room for the three. In the bulkhead above the bunk were two port-holes large enough to frame a man's head.

Blackie went directly to the point.

"Skipper, I've got a lad over there who must go to the hospital. If we fail to get him in tonight——"

"I know, I know," Giltz broke in; "you semaphored all that."

He paused, pointing to the two chairs. They declined.

"Is that what you swam out for?" he went on. "Just to tell me that all over?"

Blackie looked him straight in the eye. As seniority goes they were on a par, both being warrant-officers. On this ship, however, as commanding officer, Giltz outranked him. On Fog Rock the shoe would have been on the other foot.

"Well, yes," Blackie replied at length. "We thought we could better explain how urgent things are. This lad——"

"Now here," Giltz growled, "can that stuff. I know all that, I tell you. They told me all that before I left Felgo this morning. I know you've got a sick man. My orders are to get him on board if I can. Those are the commandant's words. I'm out here to try. Tryin' to insinuate, are you, that I'm not tryin'?"

"Don't look a —— of a lot like it," Graveyard spoke up.

Giltz turned on him and snarled:

"You keep your trap out of this! I don't need any advice from an enlisted man!"

"As I understand you, Giltz," Blackie put in, "you don't need any advice from any man."

"No," Giltz snapped; then he added, grinning, "nor woman. If I ever do need advice I won't come to a couple of radio girls."

"But what would you say, Giltz," said Blackie, with a disconcerting smile, "if a couple of radio girls turned to and showed you how to put this ship into that cove?"

Giltz had no answer but a glare. He noted the quick, strategic glance Blackie shot at Graveyard, and felt a sudden surge of misgivings. In the same instant it flashed back to him that he had left the wheel unmanned. She was rolling, wallowing in the trough of the sea.

"Le'me out o' here!" he snarled, the fear of the hereafter in his fishy eyes. "She'll swamp!"

As he lunged for the door he received a push that sent him sprawling on deck. The door opened, admitting a cold gust, then banged shut. The key clicked. Giltz was locked in his cabin.

GILTZ screamed like a madman. He pounded and kicked and threw his weight against the door, cursed at it, spat at it. He pulled his hair. He yelled, "Help! Help!" but realized as he did that he might as well be calling to some one in China. For it took lusty lungs to force sound through that roar and crash. And had he not chased all the deck-hands away from the life-boat—as well as Murray from the wheel-house. There was no one on the topside but the two naked men and himself. There was no voice-tube in the cabin. He was shut off.

He scrambled up on to his bunk to one of the port-holes and began frantically unscrewing the dog that held it closed. Jerking it open he thrust his head out and bellowed—

"Below, there!"

One of Graveyard's big gnarled hands covered his face and pushed him back in.

"—— you! I'll kick a lung— You'll sweat for this!"

"Keep cool, skipper, keep cool," Graveyard grinned in at him. "Everything is hunky-dory. Don't worry."

With that Graveyard turned his head, lifted a megaphone to his mouth and hoarsely shouted over the rail to the men below.

"All hands lay aft! Stand by to grab that stretcher aft, when we get inside! Lay aft, everybody!"

Giltz's blood surged riotously as he heard a faint, barely audible, "Aye-aye, sir."

The numskulls! They thought it was he, their skipper, who had shouted the command.

"—— you!" he frothed. "Whose command is this!" His voice rose to a shriek. "Whose command! Hey! Whose command, I say! I'll kick a lung—have the pair of you hung!"

"Some poetry, some poetry," Graveyard commented.

"Get around there and open that door! Le'me out o' here! Obey my orders, —— you, obey my orders!"

"Sorry, skipper, but the gunner's in command just now."

"Le'me out o' here I say! I'll kick a lung—you'll smash my ship! You'll wreck 'er!"

"Oh, wreck your grandmother," Graveyard laughed. "The gunner's at the wheel, and he knows this ship better than you do. No kiddin', he knows 'er. He used to be on 'er."

Graveyard turned his head forward, held up the megaphone and shouted:

"All right, gunner. Steady!"

"You see," he went on to Giltz, "we're gonna back in, grab the stretcher on the fly aft, then run like —— for it."

"You're crazy! you're crazy!" Giltz sputtered. "You can't handle this ship in that little hole with a sea like this beatin' in!"

"But I tell you, skipper, the gunner's at the wheel! He'll back 'er in there just as easy——"

"Back in! Back in!" Giltz was shrieking again. "Back in! You —— fools! Back in!"

"Sure. The gunner figures it that way. You see, she handles easier going ahead. The idea is, with her head pointing seaward we can always run for it. See? If we went in bow first and the sea caught and twisted us around—we'd be stuck. Don't worry, skipper, the gunner knows 'er."

BLACKIE did know the *Saraso.* He knew every little trick and twist of her whimsical little make-up. Not for nothing had he voluntarily taken wheel-watches, when he, years before in his gob days, had been her only radio operator. And it was with the feeling of gripping the hand of an old shipmate that he gripped those wheel-spokes.

She had wallowed around till she lay pointing west, with the cove on her port and the wind and sea on her starboard side. Leaving the helm 'midships, he rang for full speed ahead on the port engine, and full speed astern starboard. She pivoted, her bow swinging seaward, her stern toward the entrance. Blackie watched the compass-card. As she came around on to "North," he reversed the engines. She stopped swinging head-on to the wind and sea, just as Graveyard shouted from aft:

"All right, gunner. Steady!"

Blackie stepped over to the port door and looked astern. She lay a hundred yards off the right of the cove, that is, with her rudder pointing to the west bluff. Just right, he judged. The sea was running from a little to the west of north, and would set her down sidewise, so that she should fetch up about off the middle.

"What do you think?" he shouted to Graveyard back at the cabin port-hole. "There's some side push. Think we can make it from here?"

Instead of answering, Graveyard pointed ahead. Blackie turned, and just in time.

A mountain of water was racing in. Gripping both annunciator handles, he waited till the oncoming comber was about twenty-five yards ahead, then rang up *full speed ahead,* both engines. Her propellers whirled and she leaped ahead, mounted to the crest of it, and would have hurdled right on over it, but Blackie checked her, jerking the handles back to one-third. The wave passed, and she tumbled into the giddy hollow beyond.

"That took 'er in a little, gunner," shouted Graveyard through the door.

"I know," Blackie replied; "but I gave her too much."

Blackie then went to the opposite extreme. He met the next onrush with two-thirds speed, and, when she breasted it, stopped the engines. But he stopped them too soon. He had underrated the mighty driving force of that furious racing mountain. She was hurled in fifty yards. Not only that. The wind caught her high bow on the port side and pushed her around, sweeping her to the left of the cove, so that she fetched up off the east bluff, with her port side broad-on to the wind and sea.

In those few perilous moments Blackie showed the stuff he was made of.

The *Saraso* was between —— and destruction. She had the roaring fiends on one side, and a grim, scowling wall of black rock on the other, not thirty yards away. There wasn't a man in her valiant crew whose mouth wasn't wide open. She was doomed. There seemed no way out of it, lying as she was, with her broadside to it; for she could hardly be pivoted around in time to meet the next rolling mountain head-on; and one rolling mountain would hurl her against the rocks.

Blackie saw just one way out of it. Full speed astern with both engines, back her down to the cove's entrance, clear of the bluff, before the next rolling mountain arrived—that was it. And back went the annunciator handles.

Her starboard life-boat rubbed against the rock, as she backed down parallel to the bluff. But she cleared it. The black wall shot past and the cove opened out on her starboard side. Blackie reversed the starboard engine to full speed ahead, leaving the port one at full speed astern. She twisted, her bow sweeping round to the north, her stern into the cove.

She swung just in time to meet the next inrush head-on. But she undershot that one; instead of mounting and riding over it, she burrowed through it. She was smothered; for fully ten seconds her whole lower deck was buried beneath the seething, boiling foam. She rumbled and vibrated in every atom of her. But through it all she held, head-on. And when she rose, shedding water from stem to stern, she was inside, nose and all.

THE task Blackie faced took courage and imagination. The cove widened out inside, but nowhere was it wide enough to hold the *Saraso* cross-wise. And holding her straight in the teeth of the terrific seas, with barely thirty feet between her and the frowning black walls on either side, was the task of a Titan.

He had to meet each inrush of sea at the precise moment with full speed ahead, and, as she breasted it, two-thirds, one-third, stop. Then ahead starboard, astern port, or *vice versa*, to straighten her out. Then, to buck the backwash, the same string of maneuvers reversed and with variations.

She rose and fell like a chip. But with that tremendous drive of her engines she met each racing wall of water foot-pound for foot-pound, giving way inch by inch but not an inch without a fight. She was like some wild, pulsating thing of life on a spree, glorying in her strength and majesty, defying, laughing at the immensities, hurling back snarl for snarl.

In the wheel-house Blackie was living on the peak of existence. Dancing from door to door for a glance astern, shouting to Graveyard, whirling about, jerking the annunciator handles, spinning the wheel—he too seemed possessed of the wild abandon of one on a spree.

She was the same old *Saraso*—the apple of his younger eye—a mighty little doer. She did what he told her to, with exactness, precision, to a nicety. She knew him, remembered him!

Below, the two machinist's-mates at the throttles thought Giltz had gone mad. Gongs, gongs, gongs! The engine-room was a very inferno.

"Say," Matt Morelock, at the port-throttle, shouted over to Jimmy Coles at the starboard, "what do you suppose that lunatic is trying to do?"

A fireman appeared in the door leading aft to the fire-room and shouted:

"Oh, Matt, wha'd'yuh think? Giltz is puttin' 'er inside! Hey? Inside, I say! Giltz! Who said he was yellow?"

"The —— you say!" Matt ejaculated, while Coles let fly a ball of oil-soaked waste at the fireman.

Aft on the quarter-deck, the crew stood well-nigh speechless with amazement. They could not believe what their bulging eyes beheld. And too there was shame on their faces—the shame men show under the revelation of having wronged some one. They looked at one another as much as to say, "And we said the old hooker was yellow! He's got more guts than all of us together."

For verily, to back a ship into a narrow storm-beaten cove, with barely thirty feet of clearing on each side was an achievement not to be sneezed at. Their skipper had a spark after all. Spark? He was a wild cat!

The wind roared; the sea crashed. Along the low crags and ledges howling sea-lions huddled back against the rock, their long snouts pointing skyward, in their eyes the horror of being crushed, mashed to pulp by this plunging, rumbling monster that backed slowly in.

She backed in with a slowness that was agonizing. Blackie had to meet each inrush of sea with thrust enough to breast it, allowing her to give way gradually, foot by foot. And time and again he had to send her ahead, surrendering distance gained, in order to straighten her out. It took infinite patience, as well as cool judgment.

High up in mid-air, dimly outlined against the leaden sky, a long black object slowly descended over the cove. It came lower and lower, till it hung twenty feet above the water and the same distance astern.

Looking aft from the wheel-house door Blackie saw Giltz's head sticking out of the cabin port-hole. Beyond, on the after end of the upper deck, he saw the lanky, skeleton-like Graveyard, waving his long arms, shouting orders to the men on the quarter-deck below. How nearly under the suspended stretcher the quarter-deck was he could only guess at, as he couldn't see the quarter-deck from the wheel-house. He shouted to Graveyard, but couldn't make himself heard.

Another thing caught his eye at that moment: a boat in the water. The lighthouse life-boat, fully manned by gobs and lighthouse men, tossed up and down a little to one side of the tug's stern. Blackie thought he saw one of the men in the boat heave a line up to the quarter-deck, but it was too dark to be certain. He scarcely took notice of this, however; for he was solely concerned with that stretcher.

Again and again he shouted to Graveyard.

Then once more he had to spring back to his post, for another oncoming wall of water loomed up ahead. Every bolt and rivet of her vibrated as her propellers churned and she bucked into it. Those few seconds seemed a long time to Blackie. He knew that her stern was close to where the stretcher hung—how close he dared not turn to see, for a half-second's relaxing of vigilance now might mean destruction. The seas were rolling in and rolling out and he must hold her, hold her dead in the water, and steady.

But it was hard—standing there, eyes dancing from the compass-card to the water ahead, seeing, hearing, knowing nothing of what was going on aft, jerking the handles, spinning the wheel, guessing, wondering, and with the desire to send her ahead full speed for the entrance—indeed it was hard. If only they would grab that stretcher! If only Graveyard would make a noise, come to the door and shout something—back a little, ahead a little, anything! He couldn't hold her head-on and dead in the water forever!

Graveyard didn't come—he just *was*. It seemed he just materialized out of nothingness. His giraffe-like neck was craning over Blackie's left shoulder, and his wide mouth was opening and closing rapidly.

"Shoot it to 'er, gunner, shoot it to 'er. We got 'im, we got 'im, we got 'im."

Blackie slammed down both handles to full speed ahead. She shot—just that—for the entrance. He spun the wheel and steadied her on the middle. Graveyard continued bombarding his left ear.

"My ——, gunner, what a crew, what a crew, what a crew! Sure as I'm the ugliest man on the west coast, this is the best crew in the Navy. Should've seen them take that stretcher. Missed half your life. Two of 'em grabs it by the handles, two others boosts another one on their shoulders to cut the line. Slickest team-work a man ever saw. Too bad you missed it. It was a pipe!"

"Well, say," Blackie laughed, "don't spit all over me!"

"And the best of it is," Graveyard gurgled on, "we don't have to swim back in. We've got the lighthouse boat hooked on astern."

He chuckled gleefully and added—

"If they don't swamp."

It had taken a half-hour to back her in to the head of the cove. She went out in eight seconds. But she didn't get out untouched. Nearing the entrance the wind caught her bow and pushed her over toward the east bluff. Blackie threw the helm hard a-starboard. This threw her bow into the wind, but her stern swung the other way.

"Watch 'er!" he shouted to Graveyard.

A thunderous crash came from aft. She had struck against the east bluff. Blackie looked around. Graveyard was gone. He looked ahead—the wide, wild, dark-gray Pacific. He stopped the engines and jumped over to the starboard door.

"All right, gunner," shouted Graveyard. "Smashed the starboard life-boat, that's all."

They met outside the cabin door. Blackie reached out and turned the key, liberating Giltz.

"Everything is hunky-dory, skipper," Blackie hailed him as he lurched out, "with the exception of a smashed life-boat."

GILTZ looked like a living ghost. His face was drawn, haggard, and his fishy eyes protruded. In that half-hour he had died as many deaths as Blackie had lived lives. Without replying or even glaring he went stumbling into the wheel-house.

"Just a minute, skipper," Blackie checked him as he reached out for the port annunciator; "give us a chance to get ashore."

"You'll regret that stunt—or my name ain't Giltz!"

He paused a moment; then, impatiently—

"Well, go ahead, go ahead, if you're goin'!"

"First a few words."

"Tell it to the general court martial," Giltz snapped.

"Just what I want to talk about. You see, skipper—" Blackie hesitated—"none of your crew knows what happened between us; no one saw——"

"The whole world'll know it when I get back to Felgo!"

"Foolish. Why not go back and say nothing about it? Merely report that you went out and got the sick man. I'll do the same from this end; I'll radio the commandant that Perkins got aboard the *Saraso* hunky-dory, without mentioning anything about ways and means. You see, skipper, it'll be an official feather in your cap. The commandant——"

"The —— you say! It'll be official ropes around your necks! The pair of you! You took my ship away from me—my command!"

"But, Giltz, we had to get the lad to the hospital!"

"Don't make a —— bit o' difference! That won't help you when you face the general court martial! Law is law. I'll prefer my charges and you'll answer 'em—yes or no. Whether that sick-man business lets you down any is up to the court."

"Come on, gunner, come on," spoke up Graveyard. "No use arguing with him. He's logic-proof. Besides, the gang out there in the boat are almost swamped. Let's go."

"You're bound to have revenge, eh?" Blackie pursued. "You see, Giltz, I want to know how to make my report. If you're satisfied to let the matter drop, why, I'll simply radio in that Perkins left on the *Saraso*. If not, I'll have to send the dope just as it was."

"I don't care a —— what you radio in! I'll make my report in red ink. I won't be satisfied till I see the pair of you either kicked out of the Navy or sent over the road!"

Saying which Giltz picked up the megaphone, stepped out to the port rail and shouted:

"Below, there! Quartermaster to the wheel!"

"All right, Giltz," laughed Blackie; "go to it."

With that he and Graveyard turned, walked aft, descended the ladder to the lower deck. The lighthouse boat tossed up and down a short distance off. They dived and swam to it.

"PUT 'er on east," grunted Giltz to Poots, as he rang for standard speed on both engines.

The *Saraso* swung round and went plunging through the blackness for Felgo. The wind had veered to the west, so that she now had it on her port quarter, making the going in easier than the coming out had been.

In the dimly lighted wheel-house Giltz clung with his usual bear-hold to the port annunciator. Now and then he cast a sidewise, speculative glance at Poots at the wheel. He hadn't forgotten that little argument of an hour or so before. He still felt that it would give him keen pleasure to put a rope around Poots's neck. But there were other, bigger necks; and to rope these, he, Giltz, might need a few witnesses. He had, as the saying is, "something on" Poots in that matter of insubordination and insolence.

"How about that life-boat, lad?" he began adroitly. "Much damage?"

"She's beyond fixin', sir," Poots replied. "She got an awful rap, sir."

Thought Giltz:

"Just like a mutt that knows he's got a lickin' comin'. He's got his tail between his legs."

He waited a few minutes. Then:

"Look here, lad, suppose you and I drop that little difference we had a while ago? How about it?"

Poots was slightly flabbergasted. He didn't know this Giltz.

"Why—er," he faltered, "why, sure, sir. I didn't exactly mean anything. I kind o' lost my head."

"I know, I know."

Giltz actually gave him a good-natured slap on the back.

"The point is, we're all shipmates. What's a little personal argument? I know if I needed your help in a little matter I could depend on you. How about it?"

"You can lay all you got on that, sir," Poots declared flatly. "Not only me, but the whole crew," he added.

"The whole crew?"

"Yes, sir. There ain't a man on this ship, sir, that wouldn't go to —— for you right now."

"Eh?" Giltz blinked. "For me? The whole crew?"

"Yes, sir. Believe me, skipper, you showed us all what real guts is! Any man that'll put a ship into a hole like that ought to get a page in history. That was the biggest——"

"Oh, Captain?"

The interrupting voice came through the starboard door. One of the pharmacist's-mates who had come aboard early that morning, entered and handed Giltz a small folded piece of paper.

"The sick man says to give this to you, sir," said the "P.M." "We got him laid out down in the mess-room. Had to give him a shot in the arm to put him to sleep—doctor's orders. Just before he dozed he happened to remember that the gunner gave him this to give to you on the way in. It's a message they got this morning, he says."

Holding it over to the light of the binnacle-lamps Giltz unfolded the sheet.

"Yes, sir," Poots went on; "biggest piece o' seamanship ever pulled. An' if them Felgo papers don't get busy an' shoot oodles o' gas about it Monday morning—believe me, they'll hear from this crew! We'll—"

"—— it, shut your trap!" in a quavering, excited voice Giltz cut in on him. "How can I read while you're blubberin'?"

Poots craned his neck over Giltz's shoulder. It was a radiogram from the commandant of the Naval station at Felgo, to the commanding officer of the Fog Rock radio station. He read:

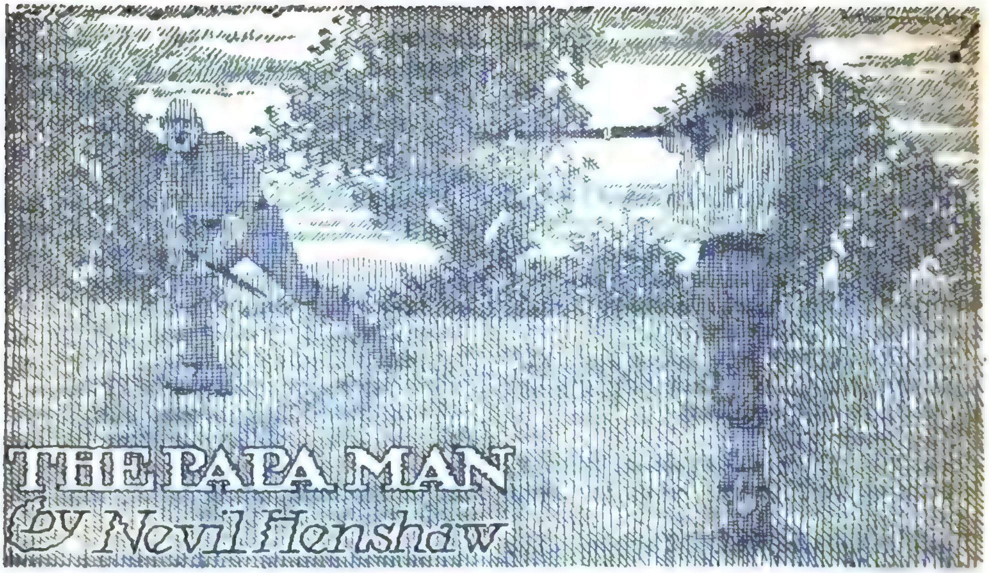
> Blackhurst, you may find it necessary to exercise your ingenuity toward getting Perkins on board the *Saraso*. But bear in mind that he must be got aboard. Also bear in mind that whatever method you may deem it necessary to employ has my full and hearty sanction. The Commandant.

Giltz turned a pair of wild eyes on Poots.

"You mind your own business! Get out o' here! Gi'me that wheel. Go down and get the yeoman and tell him to get the —— up here!"

And when the yeoman came—

"I want my resignation!" declared Giltz. "Start it the first thing in the morning, so it goes into the commandant's office first thing Monday morning! Get out o' here! Get! I'll kick a lung out o' you!"



THE PAPA MAN

by Nevil Henshaw

Author of "The Trail at Landry," "For France," etc.

CROUCHET was the bully of Landry. He was a great hulking creature, and his fists were like the grandfathers of all the fists that one had ever seen. His face, broad and heavily featured, would have been empty but for the eyes. These eyes expressed Crouchet's entire nature. They were small eyes, very round and red—the eyes of a wild pig.

Perhaps, in a different community, Crouchet would not have prospered. After a certain amount of being knocked about, his neighbors would have combined to abate him as a public nusiance. But Crouchet was blessed with an environment peculiarly suited to his talents.

The Cajans of southwestern Louisiana are a patient, long-suffering people. Also they are inordinately fond of dancing. Hence the bully.

He it is who enlivens the Saturday-night balls by taking the center of the hall, by thumping his chest and announcing, with the bellow of an angry bull—

"*Moi suis maître du bal.*"

Should any one doubt his assertion that he is master of the ball, there is a fighting-green just outside where the matter may be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Thus bullies come and bullies go, while some, like the proverbial brook, go on forever. Of the latter class Crouchet was a shining example. Not only was he the long-established champion of his own particular dance-hall—when he chose to wander abroad, his fellow bullies saw fit to go into temporary eclipse.

All of which was not lost upon the inhabitants of Landry. To the wounds and bruises of their self-esteem they could at least apply the ointment of civic pride.

"He is something, that one," they said. "When he is about, the others hunt their holes."

To which Crouchet replied quite frankly:

"Me? I am the Papa Man."

So there it was. The inhabitants might not care for hard words and harder blows, but at least they had the consolation of their Papa Man.

Yet it must not be supposed the Crouchet controlled the destinies of Landry. The leadership of even so remote a settlement demanded certain requirements of tradition and intelligence of which the Papa Man was wholly devoid.

Thus the tradition was supplied by old Marcel Landry, patriarch and founder of the village. For the intelligence there was Père Bertrand, the *curé*. This pair, familiarly known as "The Two," ruled supreme at Landry.

Agreeing in most things, the Two were divided upon the subject of Crouchet. Indeed the exploits of the Papa Man were often the subject of argument between them.

The patriarch, a huge man himself with a turbulent youth behind him, was inclined to consider the bully with the easy indifference of his followers.

"He is a nuisance, yes—this Crouchet," he would admit. "Yet he is also a man. We would be little known without him."

Père Bertrand was not so tolerant. To begin with he was what was known as "A Frenchman from France." In addition he was endowed with the unflagging zeal and spirit of the militant churchman.

"Man?" he would retort. "Does a man knock about fellow creatures so much smaller and weaker than himself? That is the business of a coward."

And when the patriarch replied to this with a smile of incredulity he would add: "Wait, my friend. Such things do not go on forever. Some day *Le bon Dieu* will put Crouchet to the test. Then you will see."

So the bully went his way, roaring oaths, punching heads, occasionally smashing up Landry's single coffee-house. Truly it was pleasant to be a Papa Man.

Then Fourmi arrived at Landry.

FOURMI came from a vague section that was locally known as outside. He was a small, dark man, with a great mop of coarse black hair, and a pair of earnest gray eyes. As in the case of Crouchet, Fourmi's eyes were expressive of his nature. When he spoke to you he stared at you with a quiet intensity that was rather disconcerting.

This puzzled the inhabitants.

"He is uncomfortable—that one," they complained. "He is all the time trying to see inside one's head."

But once Fourmi had embarked upon the venture that had brought him to Landry, his staring was forgotten. For Fourmi was a saddler, and his coming filled an aching void in this community of small planters and farmers. Before it had been the custom to do such patching of harness as was necessary with bent nails and bits of twisted wire. Now Fourmi wrought miracles upon the damaged leather.

And, better still, when Fourmi promised that a certain piece of work would be ready at a certain time, it was ready. It was his boast, his pride, that he had never kept a patron waiting. This, in a land where punctuality was unknown, was enough to make Fourmi famous. Before his little shop had been open a week he was looked upon as a public benefactor.

Now it is probable that, under ordinary circumstances, the saddler would not have won his popularity so easily. But Fourmi had been lucky in the time of his arrival. Three days before he tramped into the settlement, Crouchet—who posed fitfully as a dealer in cattle—had departed from Landry. Thus, while the saddler was establishing himself in his chosen business, the bully roamed the parish in search of cheap live-stock.

Naturally Fourmi heard of Crouchet. From the very first day he was regaled with tales of the Papa Man's prowess.

"Wait until he is back. Then you will see something," prophesied the inhabitants.

At first Fourmi paid little attention. He was small and inoffensive. Surely he could furnish little amusement for the redoubtable Crouchet.

Later, as the talk went on, Fourmi gave it more heed. Having knocked about, he had met many men, and his calm gray eyes had studied them. Also it was his habit to take stock of the future.

So Fourmi began to consider Crouchet in the light of former experience. Apparently here was no ordinary bully. Each newcomer, it seemed, must pay tribute to his brutality. Knowing that bullies, like teases, soon tire of a willing victim, Fourmi decided upon a course of action. To all that was demanded of him he would submit both quickly and cheerfully. Thus, through his very complaisance, his trial would soon be over.

Having determined what it was best to do, Fourmi passed on in his thoughts to what he would *like* to do. In the long hours that he worked at his bench, his fingers moving mechanically, the saddler was wont to occupy himself with thinking. And in a place like Landry there was little to think about. Accordingly the matter of Crouchet was as food and drink to the hungry mind of Fourmi.

In his travels around Fourmi had heard many tales. Now he recalled them. It seemed that, more than once, through sheer audacity, a small man had got the better of a large one. That affair at St. Pierre, for example—the one at Loreauville. And then there were others.

Carefully Fourmi went over them, changing, adapting, adding various details. In the end he had planned an affair that might well be a triumph. Then, quite promptly and sensibly, he put the whole matter out of his mind. This was a business for a daredevil. He was a quiet workman with his living to earn.

Thus, when finally Fourmi heard that Crouchet had ridden into town one morning, the saddler merely shrugged with the grimace of one who prepares himself for an ordeal, unpleasant perhaps, but of brief duration.

"*Bien,*" said he to himself. "When my work is done I will go to the coffee-house. If I am pleasant, it will soon be over."

THIS waiting was Fourmi's one mistake. Perhaps, had he gone at once, Crouchet, after playing his usual pranks, would have forgotten him for weightier matters. Later, having taken the saddler's measure, he would have considered him with the mild contempt which he bestowed impartially upon the other inhabitants.

As it was, Crouchet had barely settled himself for his first day at the coffee-house before he was told of Fourmi. Afterward each fresh arrival had something to say. Fourmi, as the one chief piece of news at Landry, was immediately produced for the bully's delectation.

He was wonderful, this Fourmi—a real saddler who had come to stay. And he did not disappoint his patrons, he had never done so. Five o'clock for your bridle, and at five o'clock it was ready. No sooner, no later. It was incredible but true. By now one was forced to believe.

The effect of this upon Crouchet was inevitable. He had returned full of his trip and its various adventures. There were innumerable tales with which he wished to delight his admirers. And now, in place of the usual eager questions, he was greeted with Fourmi. Fourmi the competent! Fourmi the industrious! Fourmi who never disappointed a patron!

From exasperation Crouchet passed to anger, thence to sullen, brute-like fury. Yet, for the present, he stayed his hand. Why take it out on these silly gabbling fools? That could come any time. First he would attend to this Fourmi.

At noon, when Fourmi failed to appear, Crouchet started out in search of him But, having made certain arrangements, he returned again. After all he must remember his dignity, his position at Landry. Fourmi must come to him.

Thus, when Fourmi finally came, the bully was in his most dangerous mood. At the click of the door he glanced up quickly to look away again with a smile of satisfaction. This must be the saddler at last. Very well, he would make him pay in full for those hours of waiting.

Fourmi, all unconscious, stood for a moment just inside the doorway. That great block of a man at the card-table was Crouchet, of course. He was big, but after all he did not appear so ferocious. There was even a smile of a sort on his face. Perhaps it would be easier than he expected.

Then Crouchet spoke in a slow, easy voice that was like the paw of a cat tapping a mouse.

"Hola, you at the door there!"

Fourmi essayed a smile of his own.

"Yes, *m'sieu.*"

"It seems that I do not know you. Your name!"

"Jacques Fourmi."

Crouchet pretended to consider this.

"Fourmi—the ant," he translated. And then—

"Why do you crawl in among us, little black ant?"

Those in the bar roared their appreciation. Crouchet smiled again at his laboriously thought-out quip. Fourmi, waiting for the noise to subside, eyed the bully with his mild, steady stare of interrogation. Then—

"I am here for my trade," said he.

"You are a saddler, eh?"

"Yes, *m'sieu.*"

"You do good work?"

"The best that I can."

"And you never disappoint your patrons?"

"Never, *m'sieu.*"

"So," growled the bully. "We shall see. Outside you will find my saddle. Bring it here."

Going out at once, Fourmi went to the horse-rack. There was no difficulty in determining Crouchet's mount. The pony stood with hanging head, unfed, unwatered —just as he had been ridden in from the prairie. As he uncinched the saddle, Fourmi went over it with a practised eye. It was a wreck of a saddle, the seams gaping open, the cantle broken, the pommel half shorn away.

For an instant Fourmi was puzzled. A man like Crouchet with such a saddle? Then he understood. The bully, neglecting his jaded mount, had nevertheless taken time to cinch on this remnant of a saddle in place of his regular one. As he went inside Fourmi's eyes were filled with a troubled contempt.

Crouchet, his blandness gone, shot a single question.

"You can fix that?"

"Yes, *m'sieu*."

"How long?"

"Several days. It is hard to say now. This is no job of mending. I must make it all over again."

"That is your best?"

"Absolutely, *m'sieu*."

Crouchet grinned evilly. When he spoke his voice was quite gentle again.

"Yet you will do better, my little black ant—for the sake of your skin," said he. "Tomorrow, at this hour, you will bring back the finished saddle. Then, if I am pleased, there will be other work for you."

Fourmi smiled gamely. It was a joke, of course. He was there to be hazed, to be made a fool of. But this—to strike at a man's business, his reputation——

Just the same he would play his expected part. He began to explain.

"It is impossible, *m'sieu*. I have work already promised for this week. When it is done——"

Crouchet broke in with a roar.

"Tomorrow! You understand?"

Fourmi's look became stubborn. After all there was such a thing as carrying a joke too far.

"Impossible," he repeated shortly.

For all his great size Crouchet was quick. In three bounds he had reached Fourmi, snatching him from the floor, and shaking him until it seemed that his neck would be dislocated. Then, heaving the saddler upward, he held him for a moment suspended in mid-air.

"Tomorrow—at this hour," bellowed the bully, and hurled his breathless burden through the doorway.

As Fourmi crawled to his knees in the soft and merciful dust of the roadway, he was suddenly knocked flat again. It was the saddle hurled out on top of him.

Once more the hangers-on shouted.

"Crouchet," they cried. "Crouchet!"

And the bully answered:

"Me? I am the Papa Man."

OUT in the road Fourmi got to his feet, and stood for a while like one in a daze, his body motionless, his eyes staring blankly before him.

"So," said those who watched from the coffee-house. "He is *foutou*, that one. Crouchet has knocked him silly."

But in this the watchers were wrong. What they saw was merely the outward, physical aspect of Fourmi. Inside he was fully alive. For all the abruptness and brutality of the bully's attack, he had seldom thought so swiftly or clearly.

Yet it was not of this attack that Fourmi was thinking. If he considered it at all, it was merely as a detail of a greater affront. He had been prepared to be knocked about. It was what one must expect. But this other thing—this cold, malignant stroke at his work, his reputation!

To Fourmi his reputation was everything. As a woman is virtuous, a man honest, so he was prompt. Through long practise it had become his religion, his one ideal. And now, at the whim of a bully, he was asked to demolish the work of years.

It was this that caused Fourmi to stand like one bemused. As one who has been struck reaches out for some object with which to strike back, so he waited, seeking mentally for some means of attack. And then, all at once, it came to him—the affair which he had planned and put aside.

Save for a few trifling details it was perfect, a weapon waiting ready to his hand. Pulling himself together with a jerk, Fourmi beat the dust from his clothes, and turned back toward the coffee-house.

Before, he had slipped inside with the furtiveness of uncertainty and fear. Now he entered with the assurance of one who goes to an appointed task.

At his coming a murmur rippled about the room.

"See, here was the saddler. And he looked like business. Now for some fun."

Crouchet, catching sight of him, stared in muddled bewilderment. Why the fool was back again. He was making straight toward him. If he had not had enough——

Then Fourmi spoke with a cold incisiveness that shore away the murmuring like the stroke of a knife.

"Crouchet," said he. "You have insulted me. I am here to demand satisfaction."

An instant the bully goggled. Had the heavy cypress bar sprouted wings and flown away, he could not have been more amazed. Next, his ever-ready rage coming to his rescue, he sprang to his feet with a roar.

"Satisfaction!" he shouted. "Satisfaction! You want some more then? You shall have it, my friend."

Fourmi did not flinch.

"Come, Crouchet," he ordered. "We are through with this child's play. You have insulted me, and you are responsible—that is if you call yourself a man."

In the instant that followed Crouchet glanced at the crowd, swiftly, menacingly, demanding his cue. Instinctively Fourmi braced himself. It was the crucial moment. If someone should laugh, or sneer——

But for once the hangers-on were unresponsive, waiting in uncertain silence, looking anywhere save in the direction of Crouchet. To the bully came a curious sense of isolation. It was as if he had been set off alone with Fourmi. He became confused, irresolute.

"Well?" he muttered. "Well? What is it, you?"

Fourmi relaxed. It was all right for the moment. He could have his say. At once he began, speaking calmly yet quickly, like one who must make the most of his time.

"I want satisfaction, Crouchet," he repeated. "Also, since I am the insulted one, it is my right to make the terms. Tomorrow, at sunrise, I will go to the pasture beside the bayou bank, with a friend and a rifle. You will do the same. The friends will attend to the loading, in one rifle powder only, in the other powder and ball. I will give you your choice of the weapons. Afterward we will fire at thirty paces."

Pausing, Fourmi regarded the bully with the level, inquiring gaze that was peculiarly his own.

Crouchet did not reply at once. Standing where he had lunged to his feet beside the card-table, he struggled with what the saddler had said. In the end he began to splutter, glancing anxiously toward his followers as if for support.

Rifles? At thirty paces? And but one of them loaded? Why it was madness. Fourmi was crazy. Who ever heard of such a fight?

With a shrug Fourmi turned away. It was admirably done, especially as he knew that he had not a moment to lose. At the door he paused just long enough for the final necessary word.

"Tomorrow, at sunrise—if you call yourself a man," said he, and passed outside.

Coming to himself, Crouchet sprang after him, his fists upraised, his face aflame. But he was too late. Already the saddler had reached the road.

Back at his table again, Crouchet sought to reassure himself, blustering, swearing, promising what he would do. Hugon, the butcher, would be his second. For the rest, this saddler might count on getting his satisfaction, enough, in fact, to last him through all eternity. He thought that he could frighten a Papa Man? *Bien*, he would see."

Yet, somehow, the effort was not a success. If the hangers-on laughed, it was half-heartedly. If they talked, it was to one another. In the end they drifted away in little groups, muttering among themselves, anxious for the freedom that would be theirs outside.

Left to himself, Crouchet crouched sullenly above his empty glass. That was the way with friends. When the fun was going they crowded round. It was different when trouble came.

Then there was this business of the morrow. Now that he was alone, Crouchet considered it fully. Of course it was a trap, but unlike most traps that he had been in before, he could not break his way out of it by brute force. He had lost this chance when he allowed Fourmi to walk away unmolested.

Now he must go through with it. Otherwise he would be discredited. His friends would laugh at him, saying that he had put water in his wine. True he was a shot, as Fourmi evidently was not. But what would this profit him if the saddler got the loaded rifle. Then all of his skill would avail him nothing. He would be helpless. It would be murder.

Shaken, frightened, Crouchet left the coffee-house, his bull-like head thrust downward in unaccustomed thought. Outside, as he shuffled along, he suddenly stumbled, breaking forth next moment into a roar of furious oaths.

Thus he greeted his wreck of a saddle, lying where Fourmi had left it in the dust of the road.

BY DARK the news was all about. Crouchet and Fourmi were going to fight. It was a regular affair with seconds—Hugon, the butcher, for Crouchet, Preajean, the baker, for Fourmi. And, as if this were not enough, but one of the guns would be loaded. There was something for you.

In Landry the knowing ones whispered together. Those willows that fringed the pasture along the bayou bank. They made thick cover. If one went there now, before daybreak, and slipped inside——

Beyond, in the scattered farms, others had the same thought, getting ready their harness, preparing for an early start.

Next to the fight itself these willows were the chief topic of conversation. In the end they all but caused an abandonment of the affair.

As became one of his position, old Marcel Landry was promptly informed of the trouble. At first, accepting the matter as merely a fresh prank of Crouchet's, he waved it impatiently aside.

"So," said he. "Let them settle it themselves. It is no business of mine."

Later, with the arrival of details and a better understanding of the affair, the patriarch was not so sure. He was the law and, as now appeared, he might have a duty to perform. If, as sometimes happened, men quarreled and began to shoot, it was unfortunate but unavoidable. The thing happened and there was an end of it.

Here, however, was something different. This affair was prearranged, a duel in fact, and duels were most distinctly against the law. And, to make matters worse, there was this talk of the willows. What sort of a man was this Fourmi? Not only must he have a duel, but he wished to conduct it with the indecent publicity of a dog-fight.

Thoroughly disturbed and exasperated, the patriarch summoned his fellow leader. At the same time he dispatched a messenger to the shop of Fourmi.

Père Bertrand was the first to arrive. Hardly had he explained that, through a sick call, he had missed the first reports of the trouble, than Fourmi presented himself.

The patriarch, always direct, wasted no time on preliminaries.

"Well?" he demanded. "What is this business of yours of a public duel? Do you imagine that I, as the law, will allow such a thing?"

Fourmi answered with the promptness of one who has prepared his case in advance. But then Praejean, his second, had warned him that he must look for some such interference upon the part of the Two.

"*M'sieu*," said he, "I ask only for satisfaction. Since there is no one to protect me from this Crouchet, I must protect myself. I am a small man, as you can see, and I am also no marksman. Therefore I have done what I could. I ask only an even chance. Surely you will not refuse this to me."

If anything the patriarch was fair. In addition it was a time when such differences were settled man to man. But there was the law.

"My friend," said he, "you are not discreet. Had you arranged this matter in private, you might well have gone on with it. As it is you leave me no choice but to order you to stop, to promise you swift punishment should you disobey me. You know of that pasture, those willows. Having announced yourself publicly, the folk will not fail to hide there."

He broke off overcome by his exasperation.

"What sort of a man do you call yourself?" he burst forth again. "Have you no pride, no shame? Would you bring your private affairs to the level of a horse-race?"

Fourmi flushed. Yet he replied with the quiet doggedness of one whose cause is beyond reproach.

"*M'sieu*," said he, "you do not understand. Crouchet has struck at my reputation. I am only doing the same in return. This Papa Man is a coward. It is time that the folk here knew of it—the more the better. That is why I chose the pasture. Should I get that loaded gun they will see."

He paused, and went on with quiet scorn:

"I am not anxious to shoot Crouchet. I doubt that I could hit him even at thirty paces. If you wish I will fire into the air. I seek only to show this bully for what he is."

Old Marcel frowned thoughtfully.

"And if you do not get that loaded gun?" he questioned. "Crouchet does not miss. He will most certainly kill you."

"That," said Fourmi, "is my risk. As I have said, I ask only an even chance."

There was a pause. Then the patriarch swore with the earnestness of regret.

"*Cher bon Dieu,*" he muttered. "I would like to see this. If only it was sure that you would get that loaded gun."

And he added, turning to the priest:

"It would prove something. Eh, *mon père?*"

All this time Père Bertrand had sat silent, a tense, bulky figure that missed no single word. And this was as it should be. A duel was no matter for a man of God. Such affairs must necessarily find their province in the temporal power of old Marcel.

Yet now the priest said an amazing thing.

"You are right, Marcel," he replied. "This affair would prove much. You should not interfere."

For all his dignity and experience the patriarch gaped, his eyes distended, his mouth wide open above his beard. Père Bertrand, a priest, urging this duel!

"But, *mon père,*" he began. "There is the law——"

"There is justice also," put in Père Bertrand. "Sometimes it is above the law."

Another silence fell during which old Marcel waited. Père Bertrand remained imperturbable. In the end the patriarch turned to Fourmi.

"*Bien,*"said he in a voice of uncertainty. "Go on with your business—that is unless you hear from me."

The saddler, alive to his opportunity, waited for no more. With a muttered good night, he slipped outside.

When he had gone old Marcel gave the priest a look in which bewilderment struggled with anxiety.

"You'll take some coffee—or perhaps a little wine, *mon père?*" he suggested.

Père Bertrand smiled his understanding.

"You think that I am not myself, Marcel?" he countered.

"What else?" answered the patriarch bluntly. "You are hard on the sinner, I know. But a business like this——"

"Marcel, Marcel," broke in the priest. "Do you think that, even had I lost my wits, I would counsel murder? No, my friend, it is only that I too wished that this affair might be carried through in safety, that, as sometimes happens, I suddenly found a way. I could not speak before Fourmi. It would have ruined everything."

The lines of perplexity smoothed themselves from old Marcel's brow. Of course, he told himself. He might have known. Was not Père Bertrand the brains of the Two?

"It is quite simple," went on the priest. "A word to the seconds and the thing is done. Praejean, as you know, is reliable. I will see him myself. As for Hugon——"

"Leave Hugon to me," growled the patriarch. "But your plan, *mon père?*"

Priest though he was, Père Bertrand made the most of the situation, glancing cautiously about before he lowered his voice to whisper briefly.

"You see?" he finished aloud. "It is safety itself. And think of what will follow. That our contention of coward or no coward will be settled is nothing. It is of the end of Crouchet's bullying that I am thinking, of the lesson that this will teach to one and all. These blood-seekers will be nicely fooled. And afterward they will hear from me. That is if you agree, Marcel."

The patriarch replied with a chuckle that ended in a rumble of laughter. Père Bertrand rose as at a satisfactory answer.

"So," he observed. "That is for Crouchet, eh?"

Old Marcel shook his head.

"Crouchet still remains a question, *mon père,*" he answered stubbornly. "I am thinking of those early risers who will wait for this duel in the mud of the bayou bank."

THE pasture beside the bayou bank was a narrow strip of turf that lay between the water's edge and the rear of the settlement. On one side was the thick fluffy screen of the willows, on the other a tangle of brush and saplings, set with a huge, sentinel live-oak.

A lonely spot at best, the pasture seemed wholly deserted at daybreak. True, the usual morning chatter of the birds was missing from the willows. True also that, beneath the gray curls of mist twisting in from the water, the short grass was crushed and trampled as by recent footsteps. There was nothing visible to disturb the four who presently appeared with the first golden light of the sunrise.

They came at almost the same moment—Crouchet and Hugon from the upper end of the pasture, Fourmi and Praejean from the lower. The principals walked empty-handed, the one with a marked exaggeration of his usual swagger, the other with the dogged determination that he preserved throughout the affair. Beside them their seconds shouldered the weapons—heavy, long-barreled muzzle-loaders of that day, of similar bore and pattern. In addition Hugon carried a flask of powder, Praejean paper for wadding, and a small skin bag in which was the single bullet.

At a point some hundred feet apart the two parties halted, and the seconds turned off toward the live-oak. Left alone, Crouchet and Fourmi stood facing one another, ankle deep in the mist. From the willows came a stealthy rustling. Dark rifts appeared in the billowy greenness, as of branches thrust furtively aside.

The seconds did their loading beneath the live-oak, moving well in behind the cover of its massive trunk. When, shortly, they reappeared, Praejean carried both rifles, holding them loosely in the crook of one arm. Hugon, hurrying ahead of him, scarred the turf with his heel, and prepared to mark off the required thirty paces.

As had been offered by Fourmi, Crouchet was given his choice of the rifles. Going over to him, Praejean presented the weapons in the same position in which he had carried them from behind the live-oak.

"You will choose," said he.

The bully was grave now, his features set in a sullen mask behind which his pig-like eyes rolled uneasily. A moment he waited, studying the rifles as if seeking some mark to guide him. Then, all at once, he seized one, fairly snatching it in his sudden abandonment of caution. Yet, as he dropped back to the mark made by Hugon, he hefted the weapon carefully, testing its weight and balance with practised hands.

Fourmi received his rifle awkwardly, fumbling it across his shoulder so that its barrel pointed rakishly toward the sky. As he moved off to his mark he had the half-determined, half-ridiculous look of a small boy playing soldier.

Praejean, his duty done, stepped out to one side, where he waited with folded arms.

It was now Hugon's turn and, as if fearful of his importance, he made the most of the final arrangements, considering the placing of the men, the distance between them, even the position of the newly risen sun. Then, moving out to the side opposite Praejean, he drew from his pocket a handkerchief, not the blue or red bandanna of every-day use, but a square of spotless white cloth.

"You are ready?" he questioned.

Fourmi echoed the word in a voice quite audible to those in the willows. Crouchet merely nodded, thrusting forward his rifle for instant use. As he did so the hammer clicked sharply beneath his impatient thumb.

Hugon raised his handkerchief.

"Attend," said he. "I will count three, dropping this at the end. Once it falls you may begin."

And, as if unwilling to prolong the affair further, he immediately called out—

"One!"

The willows rustled loudly and, had Hugon found eyes for them, he might have thought that they had put forth a crop of strangely human looking fruit. But Hugon saw only Crouchet, who was raising his rifle, the face above it gray and set with deadly purpose. Fourmi stood as before, an uncouth little duellist, his rifle still pointing absurdly toward the sky.

"Two!" counted Hugon, and Crouchet's rifle came into position, its muzzle covering the motionless figure before him.

"Three!"

And Hugon's fingers opened, so that the handkerchief fluttered limply earthward.

With the first flash of white Crouchet fired, swiftly yet carefully, allowing himself the instant of time that ensures a perfect aim. Then, lowering his rifle, he stared at Fourmi, his face suffused, like one who has completed some heavy task. In his look triumph struggled with anxiety, as he waited for his man to fall.

But Fourmi did not fall. Instead he seemed rather to straighten as he unshouldered his rifle and drew back its heavy hammer. Slowly, clumsily, he raised the weapon, its stock against his shoulder, its barrel wavering uncertainly at the level of Crouchet's mighty chest.

And, as Crouchet watched, his face drained white again, while emotions flashed across it like lightning against a pallid sky—incredulity, realization, withering fear, in the end, a terrified fascination. Down fell his weapon unheeded. Up went one hand in a gesture of protest, of supplication. His lips opened uselessly upon a paralyzed throat, but above them the pig-eyes were piteous.

Yet Fourmi paid no heed. His rifle barrel steady now, he had settled down to a long and careful aim.

At this panic seized Crouchet, stark unreasoning panic, that whirled him about and sent him running across the mist-covered grass. And as he ran he twisted ludicrously, dodging from side to side.

On the instant Fourmi acted, snatching the rifle from his shoulder, and pointing it once more skyward.

"For you, Papa Man!" he cried, and fired.

At the shot Crouchet stopped with the startling abruptness of one who has crashed full against a solid wall. Out went both arms, while his whole great body stiffened. Then, with a swish and a thud, he went over on his face.

For a moment there was silence, the three remaining figures standing as if spellbound in the early morning light. And then, scolding loudly as he advanced, old Marcel appeared from the shelter of the live-oak.

"Hola, you blackbirds!" he shouted. "Come out from those willows, and hear of what fools you have been. You wanted a duel? *Bien*, I have given you one—with empty rifles. You sought for blood, eh? A fine lot you are. Believe me, Père Bertrand will have something to say to you on Sunday."

Out from the willows crept the watchers, looking shamefacedly at the patriarch, casting uncertain glances toward the prostrate figure of Crouchet. Observing this, old Marcel called again, his voice thick with disgust and disappointment.

"So," said he bitterly. "Look well at your Papa Man and remember him. A brave one he is, who runs at sight of a gun, and faints at sound of it."

By now the patriarch had reached the seconds, and Hugon spoke to him.

"Pardon, *m'sieu*," said he. "Crouchet has not fainted. He is dead. I have waited for you before going to him."

The face of old Marcel clouded, instantly to clear again.

"But nonsense," he growled. "The guns had no bullets. Did I not load them myself? And you, Praejean? There were no tricks?"

"As you saw, *m'sieu*," answered the baker. "Did you not watch from behind the tree?"

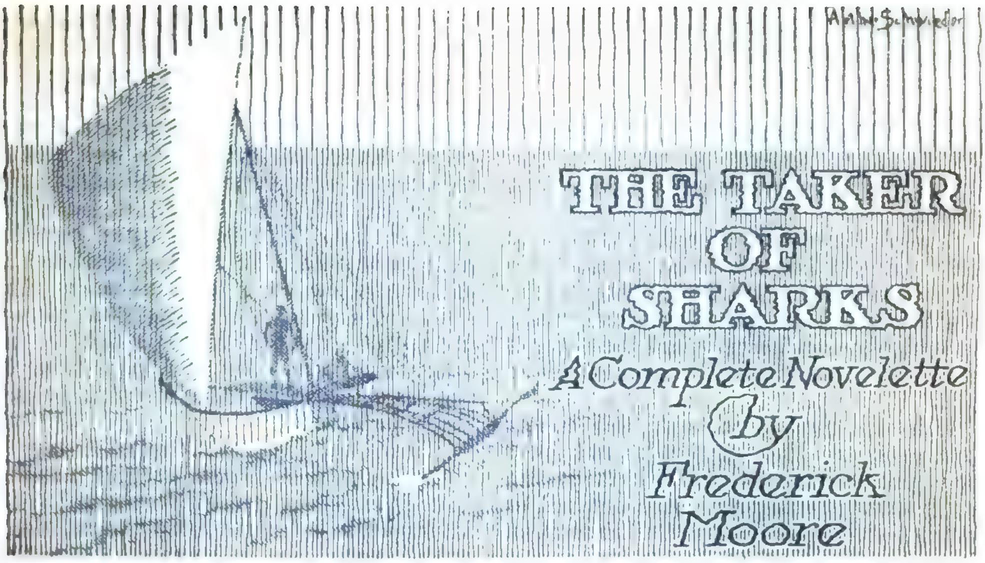
Hugon, an expert in death, shrugged confidently.

"Just the same I am right," he insisted. "It is death when one falls that way. You will see."

The patriarch quickened his stride.

"You are mad, Hugon," he cried with anxious impatience. "There were no bullets. And, in addition, you saw Fourmi. He fired straight up—in the air. It is impossible."

But old Marcel was wrong, for when they reached Crouchet he was dead, as the butcher had declared him to be. And, save for the last, frozen horror in his staring eyes, he bore no mark of his passing.



THE TAKER OF SHARKS

A Complete Novelette

by Frederick Moore

Author of "The Treasure of Boo-Hoo," "The Slick Guy," etc.

AVERY, loafing on the veranda of his bungalow that morning, saw a small steamer coming down from the northward of his island. He picked up the binoculars from the table, and moving a trifle so that he could see between the tall boles of the palm-trees, he studied the vessel for a few minutes.

"The *Island Queen*," he remarked. "And heading to pass some ten miles out—which means I get no mail this down-trip."

He was a bit disappointed that the steamer was not coming in close to drop him a few packets, for, being the only white man on the island, he enjoyed a few minutes' gossip with Captain Berwick of the *Queen* about once in three months.

A man not yet thirty, Avery looked older. Perhaps it was the serious look about his eyes which gave him the appearance of a man who had been through hardships, worried about responsibilities, and had been through more than one disaster in the business of tropical planting.

As he lounged now on the veranda of his bungalow, a tall glass of cooling yellow liquid on the table at his elbow, Avery looked more like a young man of leisure than a maker of plantations out of wild and jungled islands. He wore clean white trousers, a white silk shirt, white canvas shoes, an orange silk handkerchief tied loosely around his throat, and a sun-helmet of tremendous proportions cocked back on his head in such manner that he appeared to be wearing a crown of vivid green. The latter was the color of the lining of the overhanging brim of the helmet.

His long legs were thrust out before him on a rattan support that was really part of the grass reclining-chair. He was smoking a native cigaret and reading a Singapore newspaper which he had already scanned until its edges were ragged and its texture turning to brown as a result of exposure to the brilliant sunlight.

Avery's face was about the same color as the paper, except for his forehead, which was its natural hue, being protected by the helmet when he was in the open. He was smoothly shaven—carefully so, for an island planter, who usually is careless about his appearance when there are no other white people about. But Avery was not the usual island planter. He was the type that makes their own plantations out of jungles, by mixing brains with hard work, ceaseless vigilance with the natives, a discreet amount of kindness, a dash of shrewdness with three dashes of patience, and as a base for the mixture a spirit of, "Never-say-quit-till-I'm-broke-and-then-start-over-again." The plantation on Avery's island represented his third start-over-again—and it was proving a success.

That is why the gray eyes had the look of

"The Taker of Sharks," copyright, 1924, by Frederick Moore.

an older man. But now he was ready to enjoy some of the comforts he had created, so after a morning trip about the plantation to see that his natives were on the job, he breakfasted and lounged, being wise enough not to drive himself to death in the tropics, a wisdom which not all white men possess.

"I don't know that I need or want any mail," he told himself, as he watched the *Island Queen* lifting her bows gently to the long flat swells of the blue ocean, while her bridge-brasses heliographed the sunlight back to him in a friendly blinking of yellow light.

With the glasses he could see a few passengers at the steamer's rail, and the figures of pajama-clad officers on the bridge under the awning. And behind her she left a white wake that cut a line straight across the blueness of the water, and a ruffle of lazy smoke that lay low upon the the sea.

"I'd like to know what that last shipment of hemp fetched," Avery went on to himself, with a wide yawn that was sheer indolent comfort. "But outside of knowing just how much richer I am, I don't know that I'm concerned about the outside world."

He finished the yellow liquid and got to his feet.

"Sanak!" he called round the corner of the veranda. "Get out the fishing-gear—I feel like catching a shark this morning!"

The young Malay came running round from the back of the house. He was bodyguard, servant, companion and general councilor to Avery in the business of the island. He stopped on the ground below the veranda and grinned up at Avery—a betel-red grin. Sanak was a mighty taker of sharks.

"*Ikan-yu?*" he said questioningly. "No sharks this morning, *tuan*," he opined, as he looked out over the sea. "But maybe a *penyu*—turtle."

"All right! Then if not a shark, a turtle. I want an excuse to loaf some more this morning, and I'm tired of hanging about the house. Tell the boy to make up a package of food and drink, and we'll sail about in the outrigger."

Sanak nodded. Once more he studied the smooth sea, while he spat betel-juice reflectively. There was a rakish lift to the knots sticking out from the red handkerchief turban tied about his head. He wore a short jacket that was open in front, with embroidered facings and two rows of silver buttons that had been fashioned from coins. About his waist was wrapped a *saputangan*, or blue sash, from which stuck up on the left side the hilt of his shell-handled *kris*. The dagger gave him his rank, so to speak, for the *kris* marked him as being above the plantation-hands. His short trousers were of baggy blue cotton, fitting the calves of his legs tightly just below the knees. His feet were bare, as was his well-muscled chest revealed through the open jacket.

"Hurry up, you pirate!" urged Avery.

He knew that Sanak enjoyed nothing better than cruising about on the water, for his forebears had really been pirates, and it complimented him to be called *pe-rompak*, as had Avery in Malay.

Sanak hustled back behind the house again, but with gingerly steps, for his feet were not tough enough to withstand the sharp stubble of bamboo-shoots which had recently been cut from around that side of the bungalow.

Avery stood for a minute looking down through the palm-trees to the beach. A couple of brown men loitered in the shade of big papaw-trees, and beyond were the brown thatch roofs of the near end of the straggling native village, partly hidden in among low, big-leaved trees. In that direction he could see the roofs of the pressing-works for coconut-oil, and the clearing where the copra-workers split the nuts which they gathered from the palm-groves.

The white rim of surf behind the white beach stretched away on either side, and a flock of terns wheeled in the air about a swampy spot in the shore nearly a mile away, where a whale had been cut up a few days before.

Picking up a green umbrella, Avery strolled down to the beach and waited for Sanak to come along with the fishing-gear and the food. From where he stood now, the young planter could see more plainly his crews of native workmen through the pillared glades of palms.

Soon the outrigger, with its triangular sail, was scudding with Avery and Sanak for the open sea. When the sun was too high for comfort, they returned to the beach.

"Lordy, but I wish something would come in—a schooner with a gossipy skipper would be fine! I'm certainly lonesome for a chin-chin with a white man!"

He loafed away the balance of the day, and as a result could not sleep. So, shut up in a mosquito-proof room, he read until nearly daylight the next morning.

II

"*TUAN! Tuan!*" came the excited voice of Sanak from the veranda, as he came running along the bamboo flooring.

And Avery heard a subdued but startled chattering from the house-boys.

"What the dickens is the row about, anyway?" he asked himself as he lifted his head from his mat-pillow.

"*Tuan!*" called Sanak, at the half-open *kajang*. "A boat—and two white men!"

"Do you live only in the night, like hill wizards, and then torment people who desire sleep?' demanded Avery in the native tongue.

"It has long been day, *tuan*," insisted Sanak, and came through the *kajang*, opening it wide from the bottom to let in the rosy light of morning in proof of his assertion.

"They come in a boat—by the sea!" he pressed, and pointing through the opening, urging Avery to come and look for himself.

"How else would a boat come but by the sea?" asked the planter. "Time enough to call me when the boat is at anchor."

"This is another matter, *tuan*," declared the Malay gravely. "This is but a small boat—and if I was asked, I would have to say honest words, and tell you that the men have been shipwrecked!"

"Shipwrecked!" exclaimed Avery as he tumbled out from under his mosquito-net and reached for his clothes. "Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"I say it now, *tuan*," said Sanak.

"And how do you know they've been shipwrecked?" asked Avery as he pulled on his clothes.

Being aware of the love of natives for making a great stir about trifles, he suspected that this story of Sanak's would turn out to be a new mare's nest that was devised to work up a little excitement for the morning.

"I have already looked at the boat with the spectacles of a hundred miles of seeing," replied Sanak.

It was then that Avery saw in Sanak's hand the binoculars that belonged habitually in the leather pocket of the veranda-table. He took the glasses from the Malay's hand as he passed out through the *kajang*. And following the pointing finger of Sanak, saw on the blue water a small boat some five miles distant.

Avery covered the boat with the glasses for a few minutes.

"You have spoken true, Sanak," he admitted. "Two white men—one asleep, or hurt, in the stern sheets—the other rowing wearily toward us."

He also made out a tiny flag, or handkerchief, which fluttered from a stick or cane stuck up in the bows of the boat.

"Get ready the outrigger, Sanak," commanded Avery. "The wind is against them, such little as there is—so we must go and bring 'em in. That man rowing looks worn out and ready to drop."

"It was for this reason, *tuan*," said Sanak as he moved away to obey, "that I troubled the *tuan* in his sleep—for I am ever careful of his comfort."

"You are a loyal man," said Avery, for like children, the best of Malays must be continually commended when they take proper action on their own account, otherwise they would never do anything on their own initiative.

Following on after his man, Avery hastened down to the beach and flung himself into the outrigger while Sanak was pushing it out through the surf. Already groups of natives were gathering on the shingle near the native village and the splitting-yard.

Trimming the small sail, Sanak laid a course for the boat, and the outrigger scudded for it before the breeze which was against the man who was wearily attempting to row in for the island.

As the stranger saw the outrigger bearing down on him, he ceased his labors with the oars, waved his hands in eager welcome, and sank back on the thwarts.

Avery, as he studied the two men through the glasses while Sanak steered, thought the newcomers were fully dressed, but as he drew nearer he soon saw that both were clad only in pajamas of some faded cloth.

"Hello!" he hailed, while the outrigger

was still at some distance from the boat. "Where'd you come from?"

Both men sat up. One of them waved a hand weakly, and the man who had been rowing responded in the tones of a man utterly exhausted. "We're from a steamer —she burned—blew up—last night."

"What was her name?" called Avery.

"*Island Queen*—bound for S'pore—from Manila.

"Passengers in her—and we're dead tired. Lucky for us we didn't miss this place, for we'd been out all day without a drop of water or a bit of food—and under the sun."

Sanak brought the outrigger smartly alongside, and Avery now had a close view of the two men. The first—he who had been rowing—did not look to be more than thirty-five. His light hair was brushed back from his forehead. His gray eyes were shrewd. He was thin of face, and rather pale, for all his tropical tan. His jacket was wet from perspiration, and it clung to his well-muscled shoulders tightly. His bare feet were in water, for the boat was leaking a little. Avery noted that there was no name or number painted on the bows, such as a steamer's life-boat would have, but it appeared to be an old whaleboat. However, he could see in the bottom a ring-buoy with the painted lettering, *Island Queen*—Singapore, on the white canvas covering.

The man in the stern sheets was older than the blond man. And the other was of dark complexion, and had a deeper tan on his cheeks, which already bristled for the want of a morning razor. His black hair was scant on top, and cut short, rising in front straight up like a brush-like hedge that gave him the aspect of a man in perpetual surprize. There was a tiny nick out of his left nostril, and he seemed sensitive about the defect, for he kept putting his hand to his face. He wore a stubby black mustache that was touched with gray hairs. His black eyes were deeply set, and the flesh under them was dark, which gave his face a cavernous look. He was plainly well spent from his exertions—or lack of food and water.

"What became of the other survivors?" asked Avery, while Sanak was securing the light tow-line to the bow of the boat.

The blond man shook his head wearily.

"Don't know."

"But others got away?"

"Yes, others got away, right enough—there were plenty of boats—but we lost 'em in the night. Only a couple of other passengers—don't know if they were saved. You see, the steamer took fire after we went to bed—fire was forward, and she had case-oil in her foreholds. We didn't know there was a fire—just turned in, both of us, and we heard some yelling—then she blew her bows off—and went down by the head—like that!"

He made a quick downward movement with his hand.

"But how did you get away in a boat?" asked Avery.

"We didn't get away in a boat," said the man, with a grin. "Just sheer luck for us. The *Queen* had a lot of these old boats on her after-deck—they'd been bought at auction in Manila, we heard, and were being taken to some plantation, for island work. When we found ourselves in the water—our cabin was aft—we were in among a lot of boats, floating about. We found the oars lashed in the bottom of this one. So we've played in luck from the first—and now look what we've done—run smack into an island with white folks! Man, but you look good to us!"

"I'll do what I can," said Avery, as he stretched back in his seat and waited for Sanak to lay a course into the eye of the wind. "But I'm staggered to hear the *Queen's* gone! Why, it was only yesterday morning I saw her go past! And what became of Captain Berwick?"

The blond man shook his head.

"Don't know that, either," he said with a weary smile. "Sorry, but I'm a little too tired to tell all about it just now."

"Yes, of course—pardon my keeping at you with questions—and your friend looks as if he needs a little stimulant. Avery's my name—I'm the planter here."

"My name's Munro—Arthur Munro. I'm employed in a bank in Manila. Don't look much like a bank's man now, eh? Well, look at what I've got left—only our pajamas—everything gone——"

"I'll fix you up," said Avery. "Lend you what cash you'll need."

"We're certainly in luck, 'Mun'!" declared the dark man in the stern of the boat. "Mr. Avery, my name's Kane—George Kane. I'm a broker in island products at S'pore. Maybe you've heard of me—but I can't give you my card, at the moment."

He smiled weakly.

Avery laughed.

"Your troubles are card enough for me," he said. "Just don't worry any more—you're both welcome."

"How long are we likely to have to stick around?" asked Munro.

"Can't say. Might get a schooner at any time."

"Anything been in recently—in the last week or so?" asked Munro.

"Not a thing in for a month. I rather hoped the *Island Queen* would bring me some mail, but she passed too far to the southward to have anything. Captain Berwick usually makes it a point to give me a whistle, and we go out to her, even if he's only got a newspaper."

"Then if you're looking for mail, Mr. Avery, you must be expecting a steamer?"

"No. The *Queen* was the only one that gave me accommodation like that," said Avery sadly.

"Is anything due at all?" pressed Munro.

"Nothing is ever due here. It's a hit or miss proposition. Berwick, poor chap, would pick up mail for Manila for me. But that's the last I'll see of him! Of course, there'll be another steamer on the run—the owners have schooners in trade, and it helps their trade that way, if their steamers make it easy for the planters on lonely islands to get a little service. And the *Queen's* owners did most of my carrying-trade—copra and hemp, you know."

Munro ran his fingers through his hair.

"But it'll be tough if I have to stick here too long—not that I want to find fault with things, now that I'm saved—but it doesn't seem right to intrude on your hospitality."

"Don't worry on the hospitality score. You're both welcome to what you need. But if you get away in a month, you'll do well."

Kane groaned at the prospect.

"Don't want to act as if I didn't appreciate what you're doing for us, but my business'll go to the dogs, if I lose that much time. And it isn't that so much that I'm thinking of—my family'll be frantic when they hear the *Island Queen's* lost. I cabled just before I left Manila I was coming in her."

"That's hard luck," agreed Avery. "However, we may do better than I've represented—as I've said, it's touch and go. Any wandering trader may come in for water, or looking for a cargo."

"I suppose the best we can do," said Munro, "is keep watch for anything going by. I'm not so concerned about time, but I'm sure, Mr. Avery, that if a vessel is sighted—schooner or anything else—you'll let us know—and we'll try to get out to her, or signal her to wait. That can be done, 'eh?"

"Certainly," said Avery. "We'll keep a special good lookout, and see that nothing gets by that could take you gentlemen where you want to go. But schooners for Singapore—they may be scarce——"

"Oh, anywhere to a port where we can catch a steamer to any bigger port," said Kane, who seemed to have revived. "We ain't particular. My, Munro, but it'll be good to have a drink—and a bite of breakfast!"

"And then a sleep that'll put us on our feet," said Munro. "I'm dog-tired—and you are, for that matter, old man. I'll say you've done your bit during the night. You were right about not stopping rowing for a minute—think if we were back ten or twenty miles, under this sun when it's higher."

The outrigger was now drawing close to the boat-beach, near the copra-sheds, and Sanak maneuvered so that the whale-boat in tow did not lose her way, but as the outrigger swung to the wind, allowed the tow to keep heading in for the gentle surf. There was a crowd of natives about the landing, and as the two men, wan and weary, stepped on the shingle in their bare feet, they wavered a bit, as if about to faint.

"I can have men carry you up to the house," suggested Avery.

But they assured him that they were only stiffened from being in the boat the most of the night, and insisted on walking up through the palm-grove to the bungalow.

III

"DO YOU think it would be worth while to send some fast outriggers to the scene of the disaster?" asked Avery, as he gave his guests some Dutch-trade gin. "There must be other boats somewhere in the neighborhood of where the *Queen* went down."

Both Munro and Kane shook their heads.

"I doubt it would do any good," said Munro. "It's our opinion that the skipper and the mate got away all right. And they'd know where to make for with a boat, of course—probably some island nearer than yours. I heard Captain Berwick calling to boats to keep with him."

"And we tried to," said Kane. "But we lost him in the darkness."

"What made us come this direction," went on Munro, "was seeing the lights of a vessel—or what we thought was a vessel."

"Probably was the skipper's boat," said Kane. "Anyway, we rowed for it a couple of hours, like mad, and then it went out, like a candle in a breeze."

"I rather think the skipper's boat was picked up by some vessel, and that's why we lost it."

"But in that case," put in Avery, "Captain Berwick would have brought the rescuing vessel back, to look for possible survivors."

"Exactly!" said Kane. "That's what I said to Munro. But he thought the other two passengers were with the skipper's boat. And as for the natives of the crew—mostly killed by the explosion forward, or drowned first off—we can't say. There were lots of people in the water—and a lot of loose boats about, such as the one we got. Then all of a sudden, there was a quiet over the water that was ghastly."

"Yes," went on Munro. "All sorts of yelling and noise, and then the quick silence."

"Of course, it must have been a confused mess, coming in the night like that, without any warning," admitted Avery. "I don't wonder it was hard to keep along with the skipper's boat."

"I never did see such confusion," agreed Kane.

It seemed strange to Avery that Captain Berwick of the *Queen* would row away from the scene of his disaster while his passengers were drifting about in boats, be picked up by some vessel and do nothing more about it. But the planter realized that both men were famished and in a highly nervous condition. So he did not question them, but let them tell their story in their own way. It occurred to him that both Munro and Kane might have been drinking heavily just before the disaster, and had turned in to sleep in a muddled condition.

The planter excused himself and went back to the cook-house to see that there was no delay about making the coffee and getting the breakfast ready. Sanak, who had been standing about the veranda listening to Munro and Kane talk, followed his master. And while Avery was talking to the cook-boy, the Malay stood in the doorway doing nothing.

"Too bad about the *Island Queen*, eh, Sanak?" said Avery.

Sanak apparently discovered something in the rafters of the cook-house which held his attention. He shot Avery an inquiring glance after a minute, and the planter saw that the Malay was thinking of something which he was not yet ready to discuss.

"You don't seem to be much upset because we've lost our good friend, Captain Berwick," said Avery, a trifle sharply.

"There's many a wind," said Sanak slowly, "that blows from strange places, *tuan*."

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Avery.

He knew well enough that what the Malay had said was a clever allusion to a native proverb which subtly questions the truth of a story brought by strangers, and he wondered what Sanak was driving at.

"Distant winds bring queer tales," said Sanak.

"You have something to say," suggested Avery.

"I say nothing against white men, *tuan*," replied Sanak with the evasion common to natives when they are not sure of their ground with their masters.

There was a shrewd look in his eyes, and he turned them again to the rafters.

"You mean that you don't like these two white men—that you don't trust 'em? Is that it, Sanak?"

"Be careful, *tuan!* These are the words of your slave. One man has the face of a fox, the other the eyes of a jackal."

"Oh, hush!" said Avery. "That's no way to discuss white men. I don't want you, or any of the other servants, to find fault with these two men who need our help. I won't have suspicious talk going round the plantation."

Avery had his own suspicions that there was something about the story of the shipwreck which had not been wholly explained. Just what it was, he could not determine at the moment, but he felt that there was time enough to seek out the details, and find the flaw. That the *Queen* was lost he did not doubt, but he was certain Munro and Kane were not telling the whole truth. Their motive for concealment was something to be studied carefully, and now Sanak was talking openly in the presence of the servants. That was something to check at once, or Munro and Kane would soon be wary that they were suspected—and Avery might never get the truth.

"I think only of my lord, and serving him," said Sanak.

"Oh, yes, I appreciate all that," said Avery. "But as to these men—if you do not like their looks, you need have no worry—you have no gold for them to steal."

He bit his lip as he said that last, for he did not want to check Sanak so far that the Malay would hesitate before taking his boss into his confidence on any subject.

Sanak turned away, sadly. He hesitated in the door, and then looked back at Avery.

"It is true, *tuan*, as my people say, the beggar need not fear the robber. I think only of your safety."

Avery laughed and slapped him on the back.

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way, Sanak," he said heartily. "You are no beggar. But we must not be too critical of the stranger in need. And I know you are a loyal man. But if you show your dislike for these strangers, the other servants will take their attitude from you, and the hospitality we must give will become hostility."

Sanak nodded, and went away toward the beach, not wholly recovered from the rebuke, and inclined to sulk. But Avery knew the native character well enough to understand that he could not allow Sanak to control his ideas, especially in the matter of other white men. If Sanak were to get that habit, it would not be long before Sanak himself would despise his master secretly for allowing an underling to influence him.

He went back to his guests, followed by one of the house-boys, bearing a tray with coffee, fruit and biscuits.

"Now we know that we've been really rescued!" exclaimed Munro with enthusiasm. "You know, Mr. Avery, there's nothing like food to convince a shipwrecked man that he's been snatched from the vasty deep!"

"This isn't much of anything," objected Avery. "We'll have some real food a little later, as soon as the cook can get busy for lunch."

He cast an eye out in the direction of the palm-grove, where Sanak was sitting on an old box, his head in his hands, undoubtedly musing over the ungratefulness of masters who can not understand when their interests are being looked after by servants.

Kane had fallen back in his chair, half-asleep from sheer weariness. He roused himself now, and stared at the food being put before him.

"Chow!" he muttered. "All right! I'll wake up any old time for eating purposes! There was a time last night when I began to fear I'd never look a coffee-pot in the face again! Eh, Munro?"

"We looked like gone dogs, I'll admit," said Munro.

"Who's the chap down in the palm-grove?" asked Kane, as he sat up to the table. "He seems to have lost all interest in us, though when we first came, he hung on every word we had to say."

"Oh, Sanak," laughed Avery. "He's what you might call my prime minister. Handy man to have about—but like all natives, he probably feels a little jealous that my time is to be taken up with men of my own kind. So he feels a little out of things—and besides, I gave him a hint that it was just as well not to stand about while my guests were talking. Shocking bad manners, some of these natives, you know—and I felt that you'd like to eat and talk without having him about, all eyes and ears."

"Oh, we didn't mind," said Munro. "In fact, he's an interesting-looking character."

And he gave Kane a glance.

"Your police force, eh?" asked Kane, with a nod in the direction of Sanak.

Avery laughed.

"Yes, that's it—sort of body-guard and valet all in one."

He had taken the trouble to give them a good reason for Sanak's withdrawing from the veranda—a reason which was not based on truth, but Avery felt he was justified in giving a garbled version of why Sanak was sulking. Besides, he began to fear that Munro or Kane not only understood Malay, but had overheard some of the conversation in the cook-house.

"Do you speak Malay?" he asked.

"Kane knows it pretty well," said Munro. "Being a S'pore man, he's picked up a lot. But I don't know the language, except for a usual word now and then—

such a word as is handy with a servant."

They ate and drank with appreciation, and having finished, sat back in their chairs and smoked, while Avery left them to give orders for cots to be put up for them, and the room they were to occupy dusted and made ready.

IV

MUNRO promptly asked the houseboy, who lingered on the veranda in case he should be needed, to bring more coffee. And when the boy had disappeared, Munro winked slyly at Kane.

"Things look lucky for us," he remarked under his breath.

Kane hitched his chair closer to Munro.

"I don't understand why you told Avery I could talk Malay, when I know less than a dozen words of the language."

Munro grinned.

"I know what I'm about," he said.

"I hope so," said Kane, wrinkles of worry coming on his forehead. "But I could be trapped on that—what if Avery should tell the servants to try me in Malay? Where would I get off?"

"Simply say I was over enthusiastic about your knowledge of the language."

"But you're the one who knows Malay. Why didn't you admit it, and let it go at that?"

"Because if there's anything to be said in Malay between Avery and his servants, I want him to talk freely while I'm about. If he knew I understood, he'd be a clam in Malay while I was around—and do his talking to servants only when you were within hearing."

Kane opened his eyes at that.

"Pretty keen stuff," he commended. "We may pick up something that way."

"It looks as if Mr. Avery is all alone on this island," said Munro casually, as if he were talking openly to his companion, and cared little if he was overheard.

"Yes, apparently all alone," said Kane, a peculiar glint in his eye as he looked at Munro.

"No other white men here—or within reach, I presume."

Kane nodded with exaggerated wisdom, showing that he fully understood the meaning behind his companion's words.

"And a nice place to live in—so isolated—so free from intrusion by people from the outside world," went on Munro.

"Except from shipwrecked people," said Kane, and then joined in covert laughter with the other, as if the remark were a joke which only those in the know could understand.

"Doesn't get much mail here," mused Munro.

"Didn't Mr. Avery remark, as he brought us in, that he hasn't had any mail—or any visit from a steamer with mail—for a couple of months?"

"As I remember, he did say he was looking for mail, and hadn't had a visit from a steamer for some time."

"I'll tell you, Munro, there's something restful about not having newspapers to read. Anyway, we'll make a virtue of our necessities in that matter. This S'pore paper—it's the most recent piece of reading matter that's around."

He picked up the old newspaper, and grinned across at Munro.

They exchanged nods, and once more glances which had their own special significance.

Munro leaned back in his chair luxuriously.

"This wouldn't be such a bad place to live—even for a year or so," he remarked.

"Oh, I wouldn't mind shutting myself away from the hurly-burly of the world for a while," said Kane. "That is, if we had agreeable companions. The three of us would make a companionable trio, speaking academically."

Munro gave that same peculiar lift to his eyebrows which he had used before, and turned his head to look behind him to the corner of the veranda where Avery had disappeared. Presently he remarked in a low tone—

"Oh, *two* men could get along here all right—and not be lonesome."

"Without any trouble at all," assented Kane.

"Of course," Munro pointed out, "the two men would have to make sure that the natives liked 'em—and a couple of men in that situation could afford to be generous with the natives. The owners of the plantation, for instance, could——"

He heard something which held his attention, and checked himself. But the sound proved to be only a servant somewhere inside the house, tapping something with a hammer. It was probably the cots being set up in their room.

"Mr. Avery is popular with the natives," went on Munro. "That's plain."

"Yes," agreed Kane. "Anybody can see with half an eye that he's well liked by the natives. Treats his servants well, I'd say."

"I'd say he doesn't get on any too well with that chap down in the palm-grove," suggested Munro.

Kane nodded.

"Probably has a little difficulty there; yes," he admitted. "And that Sanak—is that the name—I'd say he could be dangerous if he set out to be."

They said nothing more for a couple of minutes, for the house-boy had come with the coffee. They helped themselves, and sent the boy away for some more biscuits.

"I hope Mr. Avery doesn't trust the natives too far," said Munro. "This man Sanak—he may be safe—and he may be dangerous. And a man like that, with a grudge, can start trouble."

"Fatal trouble," replied Kane.

"But I rather think Mr. Avery's solid enough with the bulk of his natives," said Munro.

"Uh-huh," agreed Kane. "But, changing the subject, how long'll it be before we get away from here."

Munro managed to lean over the table in an attempt to pick up a match.

"All a matter of speed," he whispered. "We've got to act—and not delay a minute longer than necessary."

"We *can't* delay," said Kane. "But—we can't do the job ourselves."

Munro nodded, and then, as if he had settled something in his mind, jerked a thumb in the direction of Sanak, who still sat in the palm-grove, moodily staring out to sea.

"There's a situation that might be turned to our advantage," suggested Munro.

"You'll have to handle that," said Kane. "You know the language, so be careful——"

"That's what I had in mind when I represented you as the one who knew Malay," said Munro, with a grin. "There'll be no suspicion that I can talk anything but a little English with that chap, so——"

He heard footsteps around the corner of the veranda, and said no more.

"Sleeping-gear ready," reported Avery. "And perhaps you gentlemen are ready to try it."

"Sleep!" exclaimed Munro. "Lead me to it!"

They rose, and started around the corner with Avery.

"We don't know how to thank you," said Kane. "It never occurred to us that we'd find such an island—or such a planter in these waters."

"An island so well kept and civilized," said Munro. "I'd say you've got plenty of help."

"Only natives."

"What!" exclaimed Kane. "Is it possible you're here without a single white man on the island?"

"Not one," said Avery. "There's an island about a hundred miles to the southward, but nobody gets over here once in a blue moon. Oh, I'm comfortable enough. Of course, if I had a schooner, I might cruise round a little, and visit. But a hundred-mile trip is too much in an outrigger, unless it's a matter of emergency. I could send for help easily enough, if I needed it."

"Ever had any trouble with the natives?" asked Munro.

"Not enough to mention. Now and then there's a disgruntled workman who gets hold of some smuggled gin, or has a row with a native boss, or runs amuck just to break the monotony. But I've never had anything serious so far."

He reached out a hand and touched the bamboo stanchion of the veranda.

"Never can tell with natives," he added.

"Then you feel safe enough?" asked Kane.

"Safe as could be expected, after four years of it."

"You're armed, of course," suggested Munro.

"Certainly. A man would be a fool not to be armed here."

"Then I don't mind going to sleep, while you're on guard," said Kane, with a smile.

They were now before the *kajang* which opened into the room they were to occupy. Avery pushed it in from the bottom, and it swung on its rattan hinges along the top. This was the side of the house away from the sea, and dense jungle grew down to within twenty feet of the building.

"Thought this would be the quietest place for you," explained Avery. "From the seaward side you'd probably be disturbed during the day by shouts or noises from the splitting-yard. I've sent word to all hands to keep quiet in the neighborhood of the house."

"You're certainly thoughtful," said Munro.

He entered under the swinging *kajang*, and Kane and Avery followed him. They were in a large and airy room which had no doors opening into other parts of the house. The only way to enter or leave was through the *kajang* opening to the veranda, which was similar to the accommodations in that respect to all other rooms in the house, except the two front rooms, occupied by Avery as bedroom and living-room.

"And while you're getting your shut-eye," said Avery, "I'll dig around in my chests and try and find some suitable clothes for both of you. Don't know how I can make out on shoes, so far as fit goes, but my ducks are all cut loose—and they'll do."

"Anything'll do, Mr. Avery," said Kane. "Don't put yourself out too much on our account—you've treated us like a prince as it is—and some day we'll prove to you that we're grateful."

"That's right, Kane," agreed Munro. "And, Mr. Avery, if there's ever anything I can do for you in Manila or S'pore, you just let us know."

"Thanks," said Avery. "But whether you're ever called upon to do anything for me or not, you're both welcome, so please don't feel that you're incurring any obligations."

With a minute's explanation of how the frame of the mosquito-nets on the cots worked, and assuring them that if there was anything they wanted all they had to do was clap their hands for a servant, Avery left them.

The two men closed the *kajang*, to shut out the sunlight, and waited until they could hear Avery's voice out in the palm-grove, talking to Sanak. Then they silently shook hands in the gloom of the attap-walled room. Tiny particles of light were visible through the interstices of the woven walls, and as they looked overhead, they noted that the partitions did not reach as high as the bamboo rafters.

"If we can get rid of him, we're safe—for as long as we want to hide here," whispered Kane.

"But we can't risk killing him ourselves," cautioned Munro. "That would bring all the natives of the island down on our necks. As you hinted on the veranda, we've got to rig things so that a native kills him. But with a boat liable to come in any day—and with somebody aboard who knows the Manila story—we've got to see that we act before the fat's in the fire for us."

"It's going to be dangerous to hurry things—especially in dealing with natives," said Kane. "But Sanak looks like the best lead we've got."

Munro nodded.

"That looks made to order for us. Now we'd better turn in and get all the sleep we can. There's a lot of things we've got to learn, and the night's the best time to work. So we want to be wide awake tonight."

They got under the mosquito-nets, tired out after their night in the boat, and went to sleep immediately.

V

IT WAS just after dawn the next morning when Avery was conscious that somebody was moving cautiously in his bedroom.

It was a slight, but regular creaking which had waked him—creaks of the bamboo flooring, followed by intervals of silence. Now, fully awake, he heard it again—that same gentle squeak which betrayed pressure on the slats of the floor. He lay perfectly still, listening.

He was lying with his face to the wall, so he could not see to the *kajang*, which was closed. He had secured it with a piece of rattan so that it could not be easily opened.

The birds were chirping outside, and it seemed strange to Avery that anybody should be lurking in his darkened room at an hour which would be dangerous for anybody who sought to move about secretly for any unlawful purpose. His first thought was that Munro and Kane were up early for a swim in the sea, and that they had returned and were moving carefully on the veranda.

But he was convinced in a minute, when he heard the sound again, that somebody was actually inside the room, between his bed and the *kajang*—and moving slowly toward him. As yet, he had not dared turn over to look toward the *kajang*, for he knew that if he moved, his cane bed would warn the intruder that the master of the house was on the alert and aware of danger.

Finally, certain that he could delay no longer with safety, he reached under his mat-pillow for his automatic pistol. Then he sat up in bed quickly, with the weapon held before him, ready to fire through the netting.

"*Tuan!*"

It was a cautious whisper, and Avery knew at once that Sanak had come without the trouble of announcing himself. And Avery understood that this fact in itself was in the nature of a warning—something was afoot which Sanak wished to bring to the attention of his master without letting the two strangers in the house know that the servant was making a report.

Avery could see the Malay outlined against the light coming in under the *kajang*, which had been opened, and swung a couple of inches free of the under-sill. Sanak, poised about midway between *kajang* and bed, was in a tense attitude, like an athlete about to jump—an arm thrust out at one side, and the other raised in a gesture of balancing.

For an instant, Avery was alarmed. He knew that Sanak had been talking the evening before with Munro, down by the beach. That might mean nothing—or much. In any event, Sanak had not taken the trouble to inform Avery about what Munro had said, or asked. And Avery wondered if Sanak still harbored any grudge over the rebuke he had suffered in the cook-house when he had been bold enough to state a dislike and suspicion of the two white men.

"*Tuan!*"

Again it was Sanak—whispering. And at once Avery's doubts about the loyalty of the Malay vanished. Sanak was coming, the planter was sure, for the purpose of warning him.

"*Apa?*" asked Avery in a sibilant whisper.

"*Datang!* Come!" said Sanak, and beckoned with that upraised hand.

Avery threw aside the netting, got out of bed as quietly as he could, pulled on his trousers and shoes while Sanak stood immobile as a statue.

Then, as Avery moved with careful tread toward his servant, the other moved like a cat to the *kajang*, pressed it outward and slipped through to the veranda, holding the bamboo framework open that Avery might follow noiselessly.

"What is it?" asked Avery, when they had gone round to the side of the house away from the room where Munro and Kane were asleep.

"I have something I desire that your eyes see," said Sanak, and putting a finger to his lips for silence at the moment, leaped the veranda railing and started for the near-by trail into the jungle up the slopes of the hill behind the house.

Avery followed him. When they were in the cover of the brush, he stopped, determined that he should not be led away from the house too far until he knew what was the purpose.

"What fool's errand are you taking me on at this hour of the morning?" asked Avery.

He saw now that Sanak had some object tucked under his *saputangan*.

"Follow me, and you shall see what you shall see," replied Sanak, and started up the trail for higher ground.

Avery, a trifle irritated by the mysterious manner of his personal servant, followed on, willing to let Sanak have his way a little longer.

When they had climbed a few yards up the trail, Sanak broke away into a bunch of bushes, and parting them behind him, beckoned Avery to go in with him.

When his master had gained a spot where the sea was visible off to the southward, Sanak pointed, and said—

"Look upon the sea, and tell me what it is that meets your eyes."

Avery made out a low ribbon of smoke trailing over the smooth, sunlighted ocean—and, driving north, a steamer. The vessel was in such position that she would not have been visible from the house, for she was masked by the high headlands over the native village.

"Well, and what's a ship upon the sea? Is it a thing to call me from my bed with the birds? That vessel is not coming to us—and why should we run about in the jungle secretly because you see a ship?"

Sanak pulled out the object which bulged under his waist-cloth, and thrust something into Avery's hand. It proved to be the binoculars from the veranda-table.

"Look closely, *tuan*," advised Sanak. "Your eyes are still filled with sleep, and you can not clearly see this fire-boat."

Avery took the glasses and put them upon the steamer. He gave a low whistle of astonishment, and turned startled eyes upon the Malay.

"Sanak!" he gasped.

Sanak only smiled in a superior way.

"What in the dickens can this mean?" asked the astounded Avery.

"Do you know the fire-ship for what she is, *tuan?*" asked Sanak. "Do you feel now that your slave is a fool to take you from sleep in a matter so small that it is of no account?"

Avery put the glasses upon the steamer again.

"Yes," he said, as if speaking to himself. "She's coming up from the southward again, and heading for another island port—probably for Makota—and that's the *Island Queen!*"

"And not burned of fire—and not in the bottom of the sea," said Sanak quietly. "Yet you have in your house two men who have come for succor—and they bring lies upon their lips. One has the face of a fox, and the other the eyes of a jackal. Is it right that your slave should speak thus of men who are of the same tribe as the master of me?"

Avery drew his automatic.

"I'll see about this!" he exclaimed, turning back toward the trail.

"Wait. If your slave may venture," said Sanak, "he would advise that nothing be done now. Serpents can only be caught by the ways of serpents—and the man most like a snake is the best catcher of snakes."

"Oh, talk your wise sayings to old women!" objected Avery. "This is no time for proverbs and palaver! I'll push that pair of men up this trail at the point of my gun—and I'll show 'em the *Island Queen*, safe and sound. And they shall answer to me what they mean by bringing me a mare's nest about having been blown out of the steamer before she went down!"

He pushed out into the trail.

"*Tuan!*"

It was the quiet voice of Sanak from the thicket.

"Yes, Sanak! Come on! I'll not delay in this matter, and you'll see——"

"He who lies once lies again," warned Sanak. He came out on the trail now, and holding out his hands pleadingly, went on. "They can laugh at you—into your teeth—when you show them the ship," suggested the Malay. "And what will you do then, *tuan?* Kill them where they stand, like pigs slain for a feast? No, I know you too well—you are a man of mercy—too much mercy—and unless when they look upon the ship, you grant me the right to put my *kris* into their backs, you shall be defeated in the handling of the matter. If you are willing that I should kill when they have seen—I say yes, bring them—but unless——"

"No, I can't shoot them down in cold blood simply because they have lied to me," admitted Avery, his face revealing his worry. "But what is this all about? I take in two men who pretend to be shipwrecked——"

"That is what we must know, *tuan*. I am Sanak, and my ways are not the ways of you—mine is the way of craft, and the swift blade. Good! They have come with craft, so let us pit ourselves against them with that which they have brought. Only fire can fight fire, only the dagger the dagger, and—I have a plan."

"All right, talk," said Avery, nodding his head in assent. "You've been thinking this thing over, but I'm still in a maze about it. What do you advise, Sanak?"

The Malay squatted on his heels.

"First," he began, "the two ate of supper last night, played cards and talked with you till late. Then they went to their beds with many grunts to tell of their weariness. But they were not weary."

"How do you know they were not weary?" asked Avery. "Why, they were worn out, man! Falling asleep in their chairs, although they had slept most of the day."

"True, they had sleep the long hours of the day," admitted Sanak. "And for that reason they were not weary. But the proving of what I say is that I did not sleep through the night. I was over their room, high hidden in the rafters of the house with the lizards in the thatch. And the two slept not, but whispered long while you snored like an honest man. And I caught somewhat of what they said."

"What was it they spoke about?" asked Avery eagerly.

"Before that, *tuan*, I wish to tell you of what took place in the palm-grove yesterday at the time of sunset—when the man of yellow hair addressed me. Thinking I was in anger with my master, he questioned me as to your kindness."

"And you told him?"

"I told him little, but he gathered to himself a belief that I was at odds with you—and in secret enmity. I let him think so. What he wanted, I did not know then—but I learned somewhat of it later. And to one question I ask from you an answer?"

"What is your question?"

"Did not the man of yellow hair say it was he alone who did not speak my tongue—but that the other spoke it."

"Yes," said Avery. "Munro said Kane could talk Malay—and only Kane."

"That was a lie," said Sanak simply. "For it is the other who knows my tongue—and he spoke it freely."

"What does that signify?" asked the puzzled Avery.

"Only a craftiness that has behind it some purpose not for your good," said Sanak. "It is good that we know so much. So, I shall go on—and give ear carefully, and think as you listen."

"Go on; go on," urged Avery, a little wearied of the native way of telling vital facts.

"Under the jackets of their sleeping clothing—as they were dressed in the boat when we took them in—they brought belts, and in the belts, paper gold. But they spoke to you of having no money."

Avery opened his eyes wider at that.

"Why, they said they were without cash, having had no time to save from the strongbox of the steamer, before she went down, their store of paper money!"

"True," assented Sanak. "That is what they said—but I was observing them at a time when you talked with them from the outrigger as we brought them in. And, in a moment when they thought neither you nor I was looking, he of the eyes of a jackal, moved upward upon his body under his jacket, the belt which was sagging down. It was this which first gave me the thought that they spoke with the tongues of liars, and I was chided by my master when I spoke of my doubts of them. Let that pass, *tuan*. Last night——"

"But what good would it do them to have money here?" broke in Avery. "At least, I mean, why should they conceal from me the fact that they have money?"

"It is simple," said Sanak. "Last night, by the light of their lamp, I saw the money-belts removed from their bodies, and hidden under the pillows. And, more—they spoke of using this paper gold to find of us of the island, a man who would, for hire, slay you."

"Kill me!" cried the astounded Avery. "Why should they plot to kill me? Why should they think of bribery of my servants on this island to put me under the ground?"

"The way of murderers is beyond the thoughts of trusting men and you trust too far, *tuan*, because men come here who are of your own tribe."

"Tribe!" said Avery. "Why, they are utter scoundrels! I had already thought there was a possibility that they were lying in some measure about the wrecked steamer, but it never occurred to me that she had not been lost. Why, I would know the truth any day—probably long before they left here, and——"

"Not if you are finished dead first," said Sanak.

"Ah! That's it! They intend to kill me before I know the truth! That was the plan they had when they came! We must act at once!"

"Act not, *tuan*, before we know as much as they know," advised the Malay. "Otherwise, more enemies may come, holding out the hand of friendship, as have these. And the newcomers of the second coming, finding that you have already rid yourself of these two on account of having discovered their secret enmity for you—the new enemies would slay you out of hand."

"But how can we know what all this means, if Munro and Kane refuse to talk, even at the point of a gun? You've argued yourself, that they need not talk—can laugh at us."

"If you take counsel with your slave, *tuan*, we shall know before the coming of many nights. It is true, as I have spoken, master, that I have a plan. From it we shall learn the truth—or my *kris* shall dip into more than one heart."

"I forbid you to kill, Sanak," said Avery, with grave face, "until you shall know for sure that——"

Sanak held up a brown hand.

"Give ear to thy servant," he pleaded. "Of what I heard last night, I shall, with the aid of my master, act in this way——"

And Sanak then laid before Avery a most amazing plan.

"Good!" exclaimed Avery, slapping Sanak on the back when the Malay had finished. "You have the wisdom of an owl!"

Sanak grinned, and tucked under his lip a portion of *sireh.*

"We shall learn now," he said, "the secret which the fox and the jackal have brought with them out of the sea."

Leaving Sanak in the trail, Avery started back for the house, his pistol concealed in the sleeve of his jacket.

VI

WHEN Munro and Kane came out on the veranda that morning, the house-boy was setting the table for breakfast. As they looked down toward the beach, they saw Avery was already up, fully dressed, and moving about in the palm-grove examining the boles of the trees.

"Good morning!" called Avery. "I didn't think you'd be up so early."

"We've had a first-chop sleep," replied Munro. "And the sound of breakfast coming along was mighty welcome."

Avery sauntered up toward the house. As he came, he looked away in the direction of the native village. Now and then he stopped, and called loudly and peremptorily:

"Sanak! Sanak!"

But he got no answer.

"Confound him!" growled Avery, "I presume he's away to the chink's place, drinking smuggled gin again!"

He mounted the stoop, and seeing that the boy was laying but one place at the table, gave instructions that breakfast for the three of them should be served.

"I hope the boy's clatter with the dishes didn't disturb you, gentlemen," he said, as he dropped into a chair beside Munro.

Both men were still in pajamas and slippers.

"No, we were ready to get up," said Kane, smiling. "Matter of fact, this island increases my appetite — that's why I couldn't sleep."

"Have you been awake long?" asked Avery.

He wondered if they had any inkling that he had been up the trail with Sanak.

"We didn't know it was morning until we heard the boy out here. Any sign of a ship on the horizon?"

Munro stood up and scanned the sea-line that was in sight with anxious eyes.

"I haven't seen anything that you might be looking for," said Avery. "I gave orders to that worthless Sanak to have a call signal up at daylight. But he can't be trusted to do anything—that's the Malay who was sulking yesterday, you know."

"He looked to me like a man who could be dangerous, if he got his back up about anything," said Kane.

"Dangerous!" exclaimed Avery disgustedly. "There's nothing dangerous about that loafer! He's one of the young bloods of the island who likes to dress himself up with a *kris*, and swagger around. On the strength of being my personal servant, he lords it over the other natives. In consequence, he's getting to be utterly worthless!"

Munro and Kane exchanged glances, and then departed for their room, explaining that they must dress for breakfast. And Avery wished them luck with the clothes which a boy had just put in their quarters.

Avery continued to call Sanak at intervals, but the Malay did not appear until breakfast was half-through. Then, Avery having sent one of the boys to the native village in search of him, Sanak came slinking up through the palm-grove, apparently desirous of avoiding the house this time, for as he approached it, he turned off and tried to escape to the rear of the building without being observed from the front veranda. The flower-grown railings along the side gave him some cover from the breakfast-table where Avery sat.

"Come here, Sanak!" called the planter sharply.

The Malay replied, and coming round to the front, ascended the stoop, and stood before his master, sulky and crestfallen at being summoned for a reprimand before the white guests.

"Didn't you know that I sent for you by one of the house-boys?" Avery demanded in English.

"*Ai, tuan,*" and going on in Malay, "but I did not think you wanted me at this minute."

"I sent word that you were to come at once," said Avery angrily, still in English. "And when I say 'come' I mean just that."

Sanak gave a toss to his head.

"I come when I can. What better can you want?"

There was a show of insolence in his tone and manner.

Avery rose from his seat and walked straight up to Sanak.

"Don't you drop the word of respect when you speak to me," warned the planter, looking into the Malay's eyes. "I want the *tuan* when you address your lord. You've been sulking for days—and I won't have any more of it."

"I am a free man," replied Sanak.

His hand moved toward the hilt of his *kris*, wavered, and fell away again.

"Ah!" said Avery. "You think of the blade, eh? Would you sheath your *kris* in me, Sanak?"

Sanak's eyes wavered before the glance of his master, and fell upon Munro.

"I'll take this up with you later," said Avery. "I know you've been drinking gin at the Chinaman's, or your hand would not dare flirt with your *kris* in my presence. And I told you not to drop the word of respect! But you have dared do that—and in the presence of my guests. Sanak, you shall be made to pay for this later."

Sanak made a grimace, and turned on his heel.

"Wait!"

The word snapped from Avery's lips like the crack of a whip.

Sanak stopped, reluctantly, and once more his glance roved to Munro, as if seeking intercession in his behalf. And he looked at the two house-boys, who stood with folded arms behind Avery's chair.

"Why do you go before you have been dismissed?" demanded Avery quietly.

"I go when I am ready," retorted Sanak.

Avery struck him across the mouth with his open palm—a staggering blow, that drove Sanak's head back, and sent him reeling along the veranda.

The two house-boys gasped in horror at the open insult to one of their blood.

"Now!" said Avery. "This is the time for you to use your *kris*, Sanak! A Malay that is worth his salt will not take that from any man! Let us see if you have fighting blood—or if you are a coward, fit only to work with the women!"

Sanak spat upon the matting. He shook his head, and once more his hand went to the hilt of his *kris*—but again fell away. For Avery's hand was in the side pocket of his jacket—and the native knew well that Avery carried his automatic pistol there.

"Now get out!" commanded Avery. "And when you're ready to apologize to me for your insolence in the presence of white men, you may come back, and I shall decide what is to become of you."

Sanak's little black eyes wandered to Munro and Kane for a minute, as if they might be more interested in what was going on than appeared on the surface. Then, as if he had made his decision, Sanak bowed abjectly to Avery, and said:

"*Ai, tuan!* You are master and I am slave. I ask your pardon for the misconduct of your servant."

"I grant it," said Avery. "I have a task for you to perform—up in the ravine behind the house. When you have run up the call-signal for schooners, come back to me after breakfast, and we shall attend to the matter up the hill at the place where the mountain spirits come to commune with their friends—you know the place."

Sanak bowed again, and left the veranda, going round to the back of the house. And presently there came from that direction the excited chatter of servants, discussing the humiliation which Sanak had suffered from the master.

"Sorry to have to do a thing like that while you gentlemen are at table," said Avery as he took his seat again. "But, you may know these people well enough to understand that if I put up with the least bit of insolence or insubordination from one of them, I'd lose control at once over the whole lot. There comes a time when I have to show that I have no fear, or there'd be danger of mutiny."

"Oh, don't mind us," said Munro. "We both understand what's necessary in dealing with these islanders. But—when we're gone—won't this Sanak, and some of his friends, attempt to get revenge?"

Avery laughed carelessly.

"Just let 'em try it, that's all," he said. "I'll show them what they're up against."

"That chap was mad clear through," said Kane. "I don't believe he was very sincere when he asked your pardon. There was a wicked look in his eye all the time."

"I'll take that wicked look out of his eye before I'm done," said Avery.

"You'd been having trouble with him, I take it, before we arrived," said Munro.

Avery nodded, and finished his coffee.

"Trouble is right. He's been acting up for a couple of weeks—and knowing strangers are here, he tries to take advantage of it, and show off. They're all like children, these islanders, you know—think there are times when they can get away with bad manners without being whipped in public."

Kane shook his head doubtfully.

"It's the worst possible insult to strike a Malay across the face, as you did," he warned. "You may know the people of this island well enough—but that sort of thing is risky business. I wouldn't trust him too far on his pretended apology. He looks like a bad actor to me—and from his eyes, I'd say he's treacherous."

"Oh, I won't trust him, you can gamble on that," said Avery. "Not that I run this island with guns, but I'm the only man who has firearms, so far as I know——"

"There are other ways to get rid of you," said Kane. "Don't take chances."

"I won't," promised Avery. "But it was time to take that chap's tail-feathers down a bit. He's been gradually getting the idea into his head, since I've had him as my personal servant and have allowed him to wear his *kris*, that he's a sort of rajah on this island. You know that the native, when he's able to convince the other natives that he's strong with the boss, begins to trade on his position. He begins to tell 'em what they can do, and what they can't do—and take bribes for influencing the master of the place to give out the soft jobs. I know that Sanak gets his little rake-off from the house-boys. That's all right—it's the thing to expect with natives. But I can't let Sanak take charge of the island—and me—because he happens to be very greedy for money."

"You certainly can't let him take charge of you," said Munro. "That'd be fatal. You've got to keep control, and you did the proper thing."

"Oh, I think you're giving Sanak credit for being more dangerous than he is," said Kane. "That Malay, for all his *kris* and his swagger, hasn't any nerve, if I'm any judge of Malays."

"So he's out for the money, eh?" asked Munro. "But has he any following among the natives?"

"A gang of his friends," said Avery, "tell him he's a wonder—and he's always at me to give them the headmen's jobs. I've favored his friends, of course—and he's built up quite a following on his ability to deliver the easiest jobs."

"Sure they haven't arms among 'em?" asked Kane.

"Maybe a few old muzzle-loaders that've been brought in from other islands—and some powder, too. Nothing that amounts to anything, except as a basis for making them believe they might do something desperate if they felt like it. But Sanak'll lose caste with his followers after what happened this morning—and I'm going to gradually get rid of him—and his friends."

Munro looked at Kane. They had all finished breakfast and the house-boys were carrying away the dishes.

"Then you believe there's something brewing among the natives?" asked Kane.

"I'm sure of it," replied Avery. "It's been going on for a couple of months—and I might as well bring things to a show down while you gentlemen are here."

"That's wisdom," said Kane. "I suggest that if you've any extra weapons, under the circumstances, Munro and myself could just as well as not wear 'em while we're here."

"I'm grateful for that thought," said Avery. "I'll have some extra pistols cleaned—some of the old-style guns covered with cosmoline, hidden away in my effects. But I don't want you gentlemen to feel any alarm over what I've just told you. I don't intend to impress you into military service in my behalf."

He smiled at them.

"I don't look for trouble—that slapping of Sanak will check it. Much better to break Sanak's strength with the natives by giving him a clout in the mouth, than by waiting until he dares start something. He's done, as a leader of a party, at this instant."

"The house-boys looked pretty mad at seeing you strike him," said Kane.

"I'll make 'em madder'n that," laughed Avery, rising from the table. "Sorry to leave you chaps alone for a while, but I've got to run over to the sheds and see how things are going. Be back in a few minutes."

They watched him striding over to the copra-clearing. And when he was well out of hearing, they grinned at each other.

"I don't see how we could ask for things to fall our way any better than they have," remarked Munro.

"The next move in the game," suggested Kane, "is for you to go and tell Sanak that Avery is really very much afraid of him. Having agreed to back up Avery in any clash, now tip off Sanak to the fact that in any clash, we're behind *him*."

"And when the smoke clears away," laughed Munro, "we'll be boss of the island—all right. I'll have a talk with Sanak as soon as it's convenient."

VII

IT WAS late in the afternoon when Munro, lounging with a book in a canvas chair on the veranda, lifted his eyes toward the hill trail that was visible over the top of the jungle from the side of the house, and saw Sanak in the distance, running swiftly for the bungalow.

"Kane!" cried Munro. "Wake up! Something's happened—and I believe Sanak has finished the job!"

Bounding out of the hammock, where he was dozing, Kane ran to the end of the veranda.

"What is it?" he asked, looking up to the hills. "What did you see?"

"He's out of sight now," said Munro, seizing the other by the arm in suppressed excitement and pushing him back. "It was the Malay—coming as fast as he could! You know that means something! Sit down. He won't be here for at least fifteen minutes, and we've got to keep quiet till he comes. We don't want the servants stirred up."

Kane's eyes lighted up with eager hope.

"Do you think he's put it over? This soon? And safely—for us?" he asked.

"Why not?" asked Munro. "He said he expected a chance this afternoon—up in that ravine, where he went with Avery. He's hot-footing it back, anyway. If he got the chance, I don't see why he shouldn't strike now, just as well as a week from now. He told me this afternoon, before he started out with Avery, that he'd take the first chance he got. And, by George, I believe he caught Avery alone, and——"

He did not finish the sentence.

Kane was thoughtful for a minute, as he leaned against the railing and stared at the matting under his feet.

"Sanak may be running," he suggested, "because he failed—and Avery is after *him*."

Munro winced at the thought.

"That may be," he admitted. "But if Sanak got caught at an attempt to kill, he wouldn't have much chance to run. Avery would plug a bullet into him, and——"

"You sure there wasn't any shot?" asked Kane.

"Not a sound. If Avery had fired, I'd hear it—those high hills send every sound of any loudness down here, like a natural echo. And a pistol-shot—why, we'd have heard it like a cannon."

"No, I don't believe Avery fired at him—as he would have, in an attempted *krissing*——"

"Avery'd have fired only to save himself at the minute," said Munro. "If Sanak failed in the attempt, and ran, Avery might take his time about punishment. He knows Sanak can't get off the island."

"Anyway, we'll know in a few minutes," said Kane.

"Oh, he was coming straight here, Sanak was," said Munro. "If he was escaping from Avery, the Malay'd make for the native village—not back for the house. That's why I'm sure it'll be all right for us."

Kane paced up and down a few times, head bent, and a worried look on his face. Finally he stopped short in front of Munro, and looking round to be sure no one was about, said under his breath—

"You know, we'd be in a —— of a pickle if Sanak, having made a botch of the job, should tell Avery all we said in the palm-grove this morning—and what you said to him this afternoon."

"Oh, sure, the Malay'd squeal on us, to save his own skin."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Kane.

"Well, what if Sanak should turn on us, and tell the whole thing to Avery?" reasoned Munro. "Avery wouldn't believe him. We took the precaution of warning Avery against Sanak—and Avery has given us pistols. We'll certainly be able to protest that we've no reason for killing the man who's taken us in after a shipwreck. But Sanak has a reason for wanting to kill—And Avery knows it. That row at breakfast was motive enough for Sanak to attempt murder, so we won't have to protest our innocence to Avery."

"Did you talk pretty openly to Sanak?" asked Kane. "Did you show your hand? That what Sanak ought to do was get revenge on Avery—kill him, in fact?"

"Sure I did," said Munro. "We can't waste time beating around the bush."

"Pretty dangerous game," said Kane. "We've put ourselves in the hands of that Malay."

Munro laughed.

"That's exactly what I intended to do,"

said Munro. "I was so open—so bold—so free with Sanak, that I told him to kill Avery. In fact, I said things to him that were so bold, that Sanak's attempt to repeat what I said would only sound absurd to Avery. That's the only way to play this game—handle the cat'spaw in the business with such sheer boldness that the more he tells the truth to anybody about what I said, the less he'll be believed. To only hint that murder would be a good thing, makes a reasonable story for the Malay—but if he should say to Avery, or anybody else, 'That man advised me to do the murder'—why, it'd be laughable."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted Kane. "Just the same, I think just as I have all day—we should have taken more time with the business—been surer of our ground, and——"

"*Time!*" protested Munro. "Where's *time*—we've gone all over that, man! We've only a margin of minutes! And don't know how many, at that! What if some schooner should drop in here, with a skipper that's seen the *Island Queen* since she's supposed to be lost? You know the first news Avery'd hand out, is that the *Queen* is lost—and that we're here. And if the skipper should tell Avery that the *Queen* was seen last night, say—or any time since we claimed she was sunk, where would we be then?"

"We'd be held for the coast-guard, most likely," said Kane, with a queer shiver and a twitching of his lips, "and taken back to Manila, and—" his voice dropped to a whisper—"and hanged!"

"Hush, hush!" objected Munro, with a grimace of fear. "Don't talk about it like that! You give me the creeps!"

"Well, that's what we can expect if Manila gets us," said Kane.

Munro threw out his hands in a helpless gesture.

"And then you stand there and argue with me about more *time* to get Avery out of the way! Fat chance we've got to take time in this situation! You know, as well as I know, that our only chance for safety is to be able to hide here for a year or more—and we can't do that, with Avery alive."

"Oh, don't argue!" pleaded Kane. "I'm nervous—all on edge. We'll know soon enough what Sanak has done—if he finished Avery, we're all right—if he didn't——"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"If he didn't—we'll have to do it ourselves."

"And we'll have to do it quick—while he's up in the brush, there," agreed Munro. "Even if Sanak failed, we may be able to go and meet Avery and finish the job where there are no witnesses."

"There's an idea!" exclaimed Kane. "Then we can come back and accuse Sanak of the crime!"

Munro threw up a hand and snapped his fingers.

"You've got it!" he declared. "In case Sanak admits failure, we'll hit into the hills and meet Avery. He'll be glad to see us——"

Kane made a gesture of warning, and Munro checked his words. He heard now the rustling of the brush in the near-by jungle behind the house, and in a few minutes Sanak burst into the clearing, panting after his run.

Seeing the two men standing on the veranda, the Malay made straight toward them, vaulted the railing without troubling to go to the runway which led up from the cook-house, and stood before them with heaving chest.

"Why do you come running?" asked Munro in Malay. "Where is the master?"

"I have done your bidding, *tuan*," replied Sanak, and folded his arms, as if there was nothing more to be said or done.

Munro glanced at the hilt of the Malay's *kris*.

"Show me the blade!" he demanded.

Sanak shook his head, then whipped out the *kris*.

"I had no need for this," he said. "I did better—and no man can blame me. The master—" he lowered his voice— "fell over the high place into the narrow ravine—and lies dead among the rocks."

"What does he say?" asked Kane, impatiently.

Munro turned to him.

"He's got Avery—pushed him over a cliff."

The two stared at each other in silence for a minute.

Sanak held out a hand.

"I have done your bidding, *tuan*, and I come now for the paper gold you promised."

"But how do I know what you say is true?" asked Munro.

"Come and see for yourself," said Sanak. "It is not far."

"We'd better have a look—and be sure," said Munro to Kane.

They drew aside and held a private consultation for a few minutes, while Sanak waited patiently.

"Sanak," said Munro finally, "Fetch us the pistols which the master placed in our room—you know where they may be found—and we will go to see what has happened."

Sanak ran round the veranda and darted in through the *kajang* of the room which Munro and Kane occupied. In a minute he was out, bearing two belts with ammunition, and the pair of pistols which had been cleaned for the guests.

"And now come with me," he urged. "Having done the deed, I desire the reward."

He led the way into the jungle trail.

"There's no doubt about it," said Munro. "He'd never have brought the pistols and handed them to us, if Avery wasn't dead—the fact that Sanak went and fetched 'em, and was willing that we should have 'em, shows that he trusts us. He wouldn't be so willing to hand arms over to us, if he was lying about what'd happened to Avery."

"It looks all right," said Kane.

"Looks all right! I'll say it does! Kane, do you realize that we're boss of the island—and Avery's heirs? We've covered our tracks, and the Manila police'll never trace us here. And we'll see that nothing much in the way of schooners knocks about here, until we're safe. We've got the place bottled up."

"Things have certainly worked our way," agreed Kane. "The natives can't find fault with us for ——"

"Not when one of their own kind did the killing," said Munro.

"Not the time to go into that now," said Kane. "Keep close to Sanak."

Munro chuckled and pressed on after the Malay, who was far ahead, and climbing rapidly.

In twenty minutes they reached a ledge that ran athwart the hillside, and Sanak broke off the trail to the rocky surface of this ridge, which was bare of brush and easy going.

Presently he brought them to the edge of a sheer precipice, which formed the outward lip of a ravine some fifty feet deep.

As Kane and Munro looked over the edge, they saw a form lying in the sharp rocks below—a white figure, all in a bunch, as if it had pitched head first into the sharp rocks. One arm was thrust out limply, and the booted legs were doubled back upon the huddled form.

"No doubt about that being Avery," said Munro, turning to Kane.

Kane nodded.

"That settles it, right enough," he admitted.

"He stood but here, *tuan*," said Sanak, drawing back and pointing to the footprints of the boots in the dry lava-dust among the rotten stones. "And as he passed, I was behind him—I gave him a push——"

The Malay threw out his hands violently to show how he had toppled Avery over the edge.

"Yes, yes," said Munro, impatiently.

He turned and looked to each side. Not ten feet away were thick bushes where the jungle grew up on the slopes of the ridge, thick and tangled, like the green walls of a clearing.

"And now pay me the promised reward," said Sanak, holding out his hand. "Then we shall give the news that the master fell from here to the rocks below."

"All right, come here," said Munro, and pulled his money-belt up from under the belt which supported the trousers which Avery had loaned him.

Taking a packet of notes from the belt, he held them out to the Malay.

"Come," he urged. "Here is the money."

And Kane, pretending to be studying the bottom of the ravine where the still body lay, moved carelessly, so that he would be behind the Malay when he stepped forward for the money.

Sanak approached, apparently without suspicion. He held out a hand, when he was close to the edge of the cliff, just beside Munro.

At that instant, Kane lurched forward toward Sanak, hands held out before him, to thrust Sanak over the cliff.

But the Malay was too quick. Like a cat he jumped away from Munro, and half-faced Kane—and in an instant he had his *kris* in his hand.

"Look out!" cried Munro.

He drew his revolver and pointing it at Sanak, pulled the trigger.

There was only a sharp click.

Sanak leaped at Kane. The Malay made a quick motion, which seemed to be but the pointing of a finger. There was a flash of sunlight on the wavy blade at the end of Sanak's fingers. He touched Kane—and Kane screamed.

Once more Munro pulled the trigger. But it only clicked. He cursed, and Kane fell forward, writhing, his hands over his stomach.

Munro leaped away, for Sanak had started for him with the *kris*. And as the white man turned to run for the trail, there was a cry from the jungle. Twenty spears came slicing through the air, their metal points glittering. Munro fell under the cloud of flying bamboo lances, pierced a dozen times.

Sanak stood near-by the shaking form, with the bamboo lances standing up and quivering like the quills of a gigantic porcupine. Kane was already lying still, face down.

Munro was also dead when Avery came clambering up the rocky path from the ravine, in response to a signal from Sanak.

Twenty brown men stepped out of the jungle.

"*Tuan*," said Sanak, "your slaves have finished the task. It is too bad—we have killed them both—but it was necessary, or they would have killed our master."

Avery stared at the scene before him.

"It is a pity," he said, "that these men came without bringing wits enough with them for dealing with my loyal servants."

The Malays who had cast the spears grinned openly, for this was praise indeed from their lord and master.

"The jackals should not hunt out of their own jungles," said Sanak, "for there is a saying among my people, that what's wisdom on one island, may be the prattle of fools on another. *Tuan*, this is not the island of these two jackals."

"True," admitted Avery. "They came too far from home with their bag of tricks. But being from the sea, Sanak, they are neither fox nor jackal, but both be sharks. And you, loyal Sanak, are skilled in the taking of sharks."

Sanak bowed.

"You, *tuan*," he said, "being of better wit than your slave, speak truer words in giving these two their right names. May I not lose my skill with sharks."

He gave a new twist of his head-cloth—put it just a trifle higher over his right eye, and tucked into his mouth a fresh bit of betel.

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Wage-Earners and Babies

YESTERDAY we went to look for some blackberries to can. A girl of about twenty-one came to the door. She carried a tiny baby and clinging to her skirts were three little mites as close together as they could be. Many would have applauded her and the show. I can't. I see only the squalor, and the misery and the utter ignorance of the family—the poverty and eternal seeking for a job to keep the wolf away.

I see the children grow up to be sixteen and then go forth to work in restaurants, candy-stores, packing-houses, etc., with no teaching, no anything at all—likely to be the prey of the first glib-tongued lout that comes along. The girls to lose what little of beauty life has allowed to them, and the boys to be farm hands, or pimps, moochers, or slaves to the capitalists in one way or another.

If I were God I would so fix it that not a working woman should have a child for fifty years. I'd like to see some of the capitalists and so forth get in and dig. I think that there is nothing more beautiful than to see a girl and a boy who love each other; but society thrives on the red hearts of the young and hoping. The thing of giving a letter from the President to the poorest woman with the biggest family sickens me.

It's a messed-up world. The best things are dragged in the dirt.

The
CAMP-FIRE
A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

SOMETHING about the history of Hawaii from a comrade in the Marines who has been digging into the records:

Naval Operating Base,
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Camp-Fire: Howdy. Here I go breaking into prominence again. What gives me incentive is a line from Warren McCarns, in "Camp-Fire" in reference to a "James or Joseph Young" who was wrecked in Hawaii, about 1800 and married an Hawaiian princess, etc. He doesn't wish to steal any one's thunder, he says, but the tale is most interesting, although I don't think suitable for fiction, because the Young family was very famous here in the early days and still has an influence on the islands.

Isaac Davis, mate of the schooner *Fair American*, and John Young, (of the sloop *Eleanor* which was in company with the schooner), who I believe was a carpenter, were two men who came to the island Hawaii some time after 1786. The *Fair American* was becalmed off the Kona Coast of that Island, and was boarded by Hawaiians who murdered the crew, except Davis. He was turned over to Kamehameha, the king, who severely censured the chief who lead the raid. Young was ashore and did not go back to his ship, and came also to live with the king. Kamehameha, by the way, was a well educated man, under the circumstances, and was establishing diplomatic relations with Russia and England. In the words of Mr. Ellis, who visited and wrote of Hawaii in 1822, "I walked to the house of Mr. J. Young, an aged Englishman who has resided thirty-six years on the island and rendered the most important services to the king, not only in the various civil wars, but in all intercourse with those foreigners who have visited the island."

THERE is no doubt that the influence of men like Young, Davis, Captain George Beckley and other white men who attached themselves to the person of the great conqueror and empire builder, Paiea Kamehameha Nui, was responsible in good measure for the great wisdom and justice shown by that monarch, and, due to their help of course, he established a dynasty of kings that ruled these islands for almost a hundred years, until annexed by treaty to the United States. These men were Englishmen, by the way. They formed part of the court and acted in advisory councils, having also considerable share in military and civil affairs. The history of Hawaii is intensely interesting and its reading will soon dispel many of the quaint and fanciful notions that so many people have of this country. While not an historian, I have looked into it somewhat and have written (and had published) a brief summary of its history for the benefit of interested persons at this station. It appeared in our local service paper.—G. W. HOPKINS, Sgt. Marines.

ANY Panamanian Kangaroos present? It's a P. K. asking:

Phœnix, Arizona.

I have been hoping that some of the old Panamanian boys would turn up. Will you ask what became of "The Independent Order of Panamanian Kangaroos"?

The Panamanian Kangaroos certainly did dig the Canal, run the railroad, and do everything there was to be done. I never will forget the night I was initiated. I never knew I had so many friends from Colon to Panama. I was discharged from hospital four days afterward.

See if you can raise any of the old guard. I have been threatening to write you *re* "Kangaroos" for several years and feel that you have many on your list.—H.

MANY splendid letters came in response to the appeal mentioned in the following one from one of our writers' brigade. As letters of praise for the magazine are seldom passed on to you, you've not seen these, but perhaps it isn't amiss to quote the following, which was merely an incidental tucked into a letter dealing with other matters:

Some time ago I read your statement to readers of *Adventure*, suggesting that it be urged to the attention of the better class of readers as a magazine of real literary merit, despite its "somewhat sensational name." I read that with a good deal of glee. Here's the reason:

In 1919 I handled the campaign of the teachers of —— County for a better salary. We won. I also handled the school bond campaign. We won. Naturally I came into contact with a great mass of teachers, and have since been somewhat of an advisor to them.

I learned that my name was known. When one of my stories came out, it was discussed among the teachers, many of whom have been *Adventure* "fans" for years. Many teachers then bought the magazine for the first time and have been reading it since. They like *Adventure*.

Don't ask me how it happens. It's not any personal popularity matter, for many of them had been reading *Adventure* before they knew me. Perhaps the stern masculinity of the magazine gives them a thrill. I dunno. I only know it has no appeal whatever for young girls—my sister won't even look at it—but when it comes to the more mature ones, well, Miss ——, principal of the new — high school, says she "hasn't missed one for fifteen years or so."— — —

And, since it gives testimony on the point that puzzled the writer of the above—as to why women like our magazine, and since I've already temporarily let down the bars on letters of praise, here's another. A woman, married, speaking:

My first impulse in finishing each new copy of *Adventure*, is to do as *Old Misery* did—leap in the air and crack my heels and give the scalp-yell. There are, perhaps, two reasons why I don't—an utter ignorance of the technique and the fact that I am a perfect lady and hesitate to prostrate the household. The second impulse, scarcely less strong, is to sit right down and tell you all about it.

Adventure is the most thrilling soul-satisfying magazine. It answers the desire, I think, every one must have, if in varying degree, for romance in its true sense—for something that stirs one's blood and makes the eyes sparkle with joyous enthusiasm. It is a fresh, keen breeze, sweeping through those hidden chambers, revivifying.

I WAS interested in your article of Oct. 20 concerning new readers—first because I wish much success to you—and second because I am desirous of sharing my own pleasure in the magazine. I do not agree with you that 15% of women readers is as high as you can expect. That is nothing less than defaming my sex! Why should you suppose that women would not welcome a magazine that gives us a rest from those sickening sex things? Do not women admire and love brave, clean men and the tales of their daring? The vivid descriptions of far away and little known places, an intimate knowledge of strange peoples and customs? Of course they do. Because they have even more courage than men—a higher delight in clean virility, a keen and ever unslaked thirst for the unknown and adventurous. We are fed up with the namby-pamby monotony of everyday life—we would love to get away from it if only vicariously and for a few hours. And this seems about all we can hope for. So I say there is no reason why you shouldn't increase your feminine admirers—they just simply do not *know* the magazine.

BUT the new readers I should like most for you to have are the young boys *and girls*. I'd like to put your magazine in the high schools as part of the curriculum. I mean it. I don't know of anything that could do the present jazzy, flapperish age as much good—a spur to the boys, a new kind of man hero for the girls.

One of your red-blooded stories read just before dismissal would send them away with a zest and buoyancy and a few real thoughts in their silly heads. Perhaps, after hearing those stories, it would not seem such a delightfully devilish thing to be slipping away with a hip-flask—it would seem just a bit tame and foolish. Not that personally I object to a flask or its contents—far from it—for myself and aged contemporaries—but I do when it comes to sixteen- and eighteen-year-old children. And it's these same children who are the most important consideration. Yes: Your magazine is a new kind of "Uplift"—it uplifts the spirit and often the hair.

I AM giving my copies to the Legion here and the Boy Scouts use their rooms. I shall "boost" it on every occasion because I love it and and you seem to have the right idea on everything else—except women.

Incidentally I have a regular he-man spouse who is more than a "believer," so here are two very loud-voiced rooters and since we have a lemon-tree in our grove, our throats will always be in good condition and at your service.—Mrs. —— ——.

HERE'S an argument all settled by Frederick J. Jackson of our writer's brigade:

Hollywood, California.

I wish to settle the argument as to the reason why sheep-herders go crazy. The real reason is not the loneliness or the sheep. It's *blankets*, the ones that are almost square. Each night the poor son of a gun has to hold the blanket up, first one way and then the other, and try to figure out which is the long way—in order to get an inch or two more protection for his feet. Try it for yourself some time—with an almost square blanket.—Frederick J. Jackson.

THE hoop-snake and the glass-snake are not with us at this meeting, but the horn-snake and what we might call the milkmaid-snake are here. As I remember it, the glass-snake has turned out to be not a snake at all, the hoop-snake is accused of being a myth, the horn-snake—I've lost track on that one, but the milkmaid-snake has not yet been wiped off the map by scientific trained observers who argue from the structure of a snake's mouth rather than from proof that no instance has been observed by reliable and careful witnesses.

Washington, D. C.

About that "snake sucking milk, not a trained-observer business." Just a few about what I saw, studied and know. As to not being a "trained observer," show me any sort of an "observer" who knows more about the habits of any animal, bird or reptile than a country boy who is a deeply interested crank about such stuff.

I WAS raised in a county in Virginia, near the Potomac, than which I think no snakier place exists. We have the water moccasin (non-poisonous), the Spreadhead Moccasin (copperhead elsewhere), the green-garter- and ground-snake, all small and harmless. Then we have the common black snake and the long, small-bodied, black-snake with the white ring about its neck near its head—"racer" this one is called, from the peculiar and not pleasant habit it has of taking after any one who crosses its path and chasing them (fact), and the blowing viper, which is a large brown, thick, short snake, that when cornered makes a blowing noise (unbroken) until killed (very poisonous). At the Reservation near Occoquan, Va., (U. S. Gov't) I personally found and killed a "horn-snake," only one I ever saw, or examined carefully. (Can give absolute and exact description, and it was the most terrifying looking snake I ever saw.)

NOW about that milk business. When a small boy I had the makings of a hunter, naturalist and wanderer in me, and would shirk work, play hookey, or anything else to watch some bird or animal, following them for a day and days until I knew everything about their habits. At an early age (can yet, too) I could tell at as far as I could see a bird fly just what it was. Studied snakes much, too, and as I was not at all afraid of them (and the others of the family were), I got many a whipping from my stern old Puritan mother. Could tell by the trail through the sand across the road about how big a snake was, and 'most always what sort it was. There was one sort of black-snake that was always very large. They would nearly always measure a little over six feet, and one I remember that was seven. Could always tell when one of them had crossed the road by the straight trail they made. The negroes always called them milk-snakes, as did the "Po-whites." Great and bloodcurdling tales were told about their doings to the cows when lying down, etc.

WHEN about twelve years old, I was given a heifer calf, which I named Dolly Varden from her color. She was tame, grew up a fine cow, a big milker. She had one fault—when in full milk her udder would leak a stream of milk, always beginning to do so during the afternoon, when she would make for a shade tree, standing there until driven home and relieved by milking, and as there was no fence law then and the cows roamed where they pleased, the smaller boys were started out at about 4 p.m. to drive the milk cows home. I had taught Dolly to let me ride her anywhere, and was as proud of her, or more so, than I have ever been of any of several good horses I have owned since.

When she would start for her favorite tree after her udder became painful she would leave the plain stream of milk all along the way. Going after her one day, I saw her cutting up all sorts of shines near the tree she always made for. Getting close, I found to my great sorrow that what I had taken for a piece of some black thing that had scared her by getting hung on her long curved horns, was a great black-snake coiled all around these horns which she was making furious efforts to dislodge.

I turned in to help her with a stick I always carried and it presently dropped off. Drove her home, milked her, and noticed at the time one teat (she had very large ones) was bleeding a little and looked scratched at the end. I told my mother about what I had seen, but she decided that the trouble came from my habit of riding Dolly in, and that on the whole, I was lying, and I got a whipping.

NEXT day I went early after the cows, found Dolly as usual by her milk trail from the edge of "Carter's swamp" to her favored tree in a field about four hundred yards away and went up to wait a little later to drive her home. Happening to look at the cow's bag, I saw about a foot of snake neck and head rise up following the stream of milk from where it hit the ground to the cows teat, and it held its head there and soon had part of the cow's teat in its mouth. A boy was with me then and we approached from different sides, got after that snake, of course scared the cow and made her run, with, for some distance, that snake hanging to her teat. It did coil around her leg a while, but we got it off and killed it afterward, boy-like "stomping" the body to make the milk run out

We drove her home and her teat was pretty badly lacerated, and next morning the milk in that teat was bloody, and as long as she was ever milked, through my knowledge of her, it was the same way. The other teats were perfectly good, but the old folks would never use the milk again.

NOW as to that "sucking business," did any of you "trained observers" ever examine a snake's mouth, especially one of the constricting sort? If you did, or do, you will find many very small, sharp teeth that point from the roof of the mouth back *down*, instead of straight up-and-down, or a little forward as some things' teeth do. Therefore a good hold on the tender teat of a cow, fevered from distension, and with the added weight of a big snake like that dragging until it is pulled loose by its own weight, might make a bloody teat, though I am not enough of a veterinary to explain. Also some sort of septic poison might account for it, but this I *do* know, and have "observed" several timse, that a black snake of that sort will follow the trail of a cow's leaking udder to the source of the leak.

ABOUT that "sucking the cows at night business," I don't believe it, for the black-snake is not a night-prowler. Certain it is they have a remarkably keen power of trailing. I have killed many of this large sort, shooting the first one I saw and waiting for the mate to follow up, as I never have known it to fail. Also I have never known any non-poisonous snake to refuse to go after warm milk when it was placed for it. Don't know about the poisonous ones, for obvious reasons. Put one in a box and try it some time, Mr. "T. O." In the W. Va. mountains I have won bets by killing the first snake, and waiting for the mate to come up on its trail. They always travel on a line a little to one side, touching the trail every little way but not staying directly on it. They seem (these large ones) to hunt or travel in pairs, and no doubt are very affectionate. I have known many farmers and millers who kept them when possible about their buildings to keep away the rats. The last time I remember this waiting for the second snake to come up, I was with Dr. Clayt Anderson of Mt. Hope, W. Va., and I won a bet from him in this way. Write and ask him about the two big snakes I shot the last time we trout-fished in Glade together.

ALSO first time you see one of the common hop-toads around, just take a broom, rake-handle or any sort of a dark stick like that, and slide it along the ground behind that toad and watch him hop himself into a state of coma. He will go in a straight line and keep it up till he is unable to make even one more little hop. Just try this.

Also I had the rare privilege of seeing a black-snake kill a rattlesnake. Who else ever did?

The black-snake is a thoroughbred, the rattler is a gentleman, the copperhead (or moccasin) is the devil, a dirty bushwhacker, but of all the mean looking and dangerously equipped devils I ever saw, that one lone horn-snake at Occoquan was the worst.—E. C. PAYNE.

A CLIPPING from the *Oregonian* is sent us by Comrade W. H. Patterson of Portland, Oregon. Here is another isolated island like Tristan da Cunha, the island it was suggested that Camp-Fire "adopt."

An embroidered reed basket, a shell necklace and a letter of appreciation yesterday brought fragmentary memories of tales of the buccaneers to C. P. Bye of the Portland Chamber of Commerce.

The tokens were received from Pitcairn Island, in the South Seas, from descendants of the mutineers of the steamer *H. M. S. Bounty*.

The island is occupied by 130 descendants of the handful of men who deserted the British craft in the 18th century. Last summer the chamber was advised that the islanders, whose normal wants are few, desired a Bible. Mr. Pye sent the book by a tramp steamer.

The letter received yesterday was signed by Parkin R. Christian, a direct descendant of the leader of the mutineers of more than 150 years ago.

THIS seems a logical argument as to whether Wounded Knee should be called battle or massacre:

Monterey, California.

On page 178 of the *Adventure* for July 20, 1923, appears a letter written by James Rall, who invites readers of the Camp-Fire to comment upon the query: "Was it a battle or a massacre at Wounded Knee?"

FRANKLY, this question is a surprize and new to me. An unbiased answer to it should come from one who participated in that fray, not from one who at that time had been hundreds of miles away from the scene.

However, as an old soldier, always interested in Army affairs and having studied the occurrence from press reports immediately after it was over, and later having listened to verbal accounts of men who had been in the conflict, I venture the opinion that we can and should term it "battle" not "massacre."

Massacre it could be called only if the soldiers had fired into a body of defenseless people without provocation. There was provocation and these Indians *were armed* in spite of the statement of Mr. Rall that only one Indian, a half-breed, had a semblance of a gun.

WHILE the Indians camped, apparently quietly on the Wounded Knee, their attitude was still considered hostile because the controversy between them and the Government had not yet been settled, hence all necessary precautions had to be taken by the troop commanders to prevent a possible surprize attack.

Presently a shot rang out. This shot had been fired by one of the Indians. At that moment the commander of the troops could not have known that this shot was caused by the accidental discharge of a gun in the hands of a half-breed.

It is quite possible and would be only natural that, hearing the report of that gun, the Custer affair flashed through the minds of the Army officers; and not to be caught in a similar predicament, quick action was absolutely necessary. However, it is safe to assume that this action on the part of the officers was not accompanied by a desire of blood revenge.

AS STATED already, Mr. Rall says that there was only one gun among the Indians, but this gentleman also gives us the approximate number of soldiers killed and wounded in that action. He places the killed at thirty and the wounded at about as many, *i. e.* thirty again. This makes the total casualties among the troops sixty. Quite a respectable loss on the soldiers' side.

Now here is a pertinent question: Did these sixty soldiers get killed and wounded by that one gun in the hands of that half-breed?

To answer this question in the affirmative would be just as absurd as asking it. That the Indians succeeded in inflicting such a comparative heavy loss upon the Army is sufficient proof that they were fairly well armed.

Hence, to repeat: Since both sides fired at each other, and both sides succeeded in inflicting casualties, the conflict must be termed a "battle."—JOHN H. NECKER, U. S. Army, Retired.

THE following article, by Captain F. J. Fraser of the steamer *City of Miami*, from the Miami, Florida, *Metropolis*, was sent us by A. C. Smith, Keeper of Camp-Fire Station No. 87. It is the interesting story, by one of the participants, of a race among clipper ships forty-eight years ago:

One of the news items in a recent issue of The Miami *Metropolis* read: "The famous old clipper ship, *Glory of the Seas*, will spread her sails at San Francisco for a trip to her final berth at Boston. There she will ride at anchor as a museum of the days when 'ships were ships and men were men and a man was a part of a ship.' "

In the above few well-chosen words you have almost written the full history or era of the American clipper ships which must always remain among the greatest achievements in American commercial expansion of the past, present or future.

It may almost be a curiosity for you to know that one of the readers of the news item in the *Metropolis* about the old clipper ship was many years ago a member of the crew of another American clipper ship of that day and was in a clipper ship race at sea in which the famous clipper ship *Glory of the Seas* was, for a time, one of the contestants.

FORTY-SEVEN years ago the writer was one of the crew of the American clipper ship *Messenger*, bound from Boston to Melbourne, Australia. When 15 days out from Boston and about 1,200 miles north of the equator we found 16 other ships in sight, all heading southward on the port tack. This was a most remarkable sight so many hundred miles out to sea with 17 ships so bunched together in one place. You might well ask, where did they all come from? They just collected in that position by sailing in during the night from over the rim of the horizon where, to the vision of the seaman's eye, sea and sky meet.

There are distinctive features about ships by which those who are acquainted with them can pick individual ships out at a distance, and it was only a short time until we realized that in this fleet were several very speedy clipper ships. Among them were the *Glory of the Seas*, *Young America*, *David Crockett* and the English tea clipper ships *Fiery Cross* and *Thermopylae*. All these ships held records for speed and their commanders never refused the gauge of battle when the opportunity for a race offered.

THAT there was action on the deck and aloft by the crew of our own ship, the *Messenger*, you can rest assured. While part of the seamen were sent aloft to reeve and rig gear, to set extra sails which sailors call flying kites (the proper name is studding-sails), the balance of the crew was getting extra sails from the sail-room and out on deck ready to set up in place. We were entering the northern zone of the northeast trade winds where the extra sails could be spread to advantage and, in a very short time, the good clipper ship *Messenger* was under a cloud of canvas from deck to mastheads. The same could be said of all the other speedy ships in this fleet. Slackness or taking it easy was unknown in the profession. You might as well look for a snowball in Honolulu as for a slow man on the American clipper ship.

The picture that this fleet of ships presented on that morning under the existing conditions of weather, sea, sky, hulls, spars and sails, was such as is seldom seen and, once seen, can never be forgotten.

THE position of our ship, the *Messenger*, in relation to the rest of the ships was almost at the head of the fleet, and a little to windward of the American clipper ship *Glory of the Seas*. *Young America* and *David Crockett*, in the order named, were four to five miles astern and to the leeward of the *Messenger*. About four miles directly on our starboard beam and to leeward the two English tea clipper ships, *Thermopylae* and *Fiery Cross*, were in the order named. The wind was from about east northeast and moderate, giving the ships a speed of about six knots per hour.

From daylight until about 9 A.M. the *Glory of the Seas* kept gaining on the *Messenger*, but from that time on we seemed to hold a better breeze and kept drawing away from the famous clipper ship. *Thermopylae*, which was holding the *Messenger* as to speed and gaining in windward work, having by the middle of the afternoon sailed into a position from four miles to leeward to within one-third of a mile. By this time it could be seen that the *Messenger* and the *Thermopylae* had a much better breeze than the other ships and were slowly but surely sailing away from the rest of the fleet.

AT 4 o'clock that afternoon the *Thermopylae* had gained a position about one-fourth of a mile ahead on the starboard or leeward bow, and seemed to be outsailing the *Messenger*. It was at this time the captain of the *Thermoplyae* hoisted the signal with the international code of flags which read: "We are bound to Melbourne, Australia"—almost as much as to say: "Kiss me good-by." Our captain, not to be outdone from a sporting standpoint, at once hoisted by the international code flags the signal which read: "Me too." The chief officer of the *Messenger* called out the order: "All hands trim sails!" From then until the finish line at Melbourne would be crossed, a distance of only a little more than 12 thousand miles ahead, the race was on.

Before sunset small cloudbanks commenced forming on the eastern windward horizon. The wind was getting a little more weight in it and there was some heave to the sea, just enough to make the ships look as if they had life in them as they would slowly rise and settle while clipping through the water. This little increase in the wind showed us that the *Messenger* was now holding the *Thermopylae*.

THEN the crew of the *Messenger* began whistling for wind and more wind. Seamen do not pray for wind, but they do whistle for wind. This in no way advocates that whistling is better than praying for wind, but it is well known that if you would only keep on whistling long enough the wind would be sure to come some time, and what the crew of the good ship *Messenger* wanted was wind, for now it was felt sure that with wind enough the race might be won.

Throughout the night it was an even race. When the wind increased the *Messenger* would close up and get ahead of the *Thermopylae*, and when the breeze moderated the position of the ships would be reversed.

At daylight next morning all we could see of our companions of yesterday was the upper sails of two ships above the horizon astern at too great a distance to distinguish the individual ships, but we supposed them to be the *Glory of the Seas* and *Young America*.

THE race between the *Messenger* and *Thermopylae* continued to and across the equator, through the south Atlantic ocean, until we reached 40 degrees south latitude. Sometimes one ship and then the other getting a leading position according to the amount of wind, with the ships never more than 10 miles apart. But now that we had reached the latitude of variable winds, with sudden changes, heavy squalls and dark nights, in a few days the ships became separated and lost to sight of each other.

The sailing ship route usually followed in the Australian trade is to sail well to the southward until reaching the latitude of about 46 degrees. This course is followed in order to get the strong steady westerly gale in this latitude to run down the easting, which is the seaman's language for the long distance of about 8,000 miles that ships had to sail on that course eastward to reach Australia. It pays to go so far south where the winds are strong, thus enabling the ships to make better speed.

AFTER reaching the above mentioned latitude and the ship was put on an easterly course for Melbourne the winds were quite strong, blowing from the westward; fair winds and with a force from strong breezes to fresh and strong gales. Now began some of the greatest sailing that the writer has experienced.

For a period of three days we did not obtain any observations. When observations were obtained it was found that in the three days the ship had run a distance of 965 nautical miles, but on the fourth day with a strong gale on the starboard quarter of the ship, a heavy billowing sea and clear sky, with passing clouds so that good and accurate observations could be obtained, we broke all previous speed records. That day the ship covered a distance of 386 miles, which was the greatest feat of sailing the writer has ever seen in a long active sea experience.

THE wind was blowing a fresh gale with fairly hard squalls, the ship was running free with the wind over the starboard quarter, there was a heavy following sea, and the ship was carrying lower and topmost studding-sails and all regular standing sails except the three skysails which were furled. We had preventer backstays set up on deck from all mastheads to give extra support to the spars, jumpers from upper and lower topsails, also fore, main and mizzenyard arm ends set up on deck, also preventer braces on the yards, with preventer sheets on all the largest sails in order that everything would hold on through the squalls without having to shorten sail.

Standing on deck, looking aloft at the pulling sails, listening to the sound of rushing water from the sides of the ship racing through the sea, and watching the wake of the ship astern were such thrilling sights that they always remain as fresh in mind as if they only happened yesterday. During the whole 24 hours the captain and chief officer, two men who for driving power, nerve and good judgment, had few equals and no peers, never left the deck.

DURING the remainder of the passage we had strong and fair winds, and the ship was driven every mile of the way and every minute of the time. From the time we became separated from the *Thermopylae* in latitude 40 degrees, south, we were not sure that we had seen the British ship again until near the finish line. Several times we did see the upper sails of a ship above the horizon line which we supposed to be the *Thermopylae*, but could not be certain that it was.

On the morning we were making land in Melbourne bay we saw the *Thermopylae* directly abeam on our port side to the northward at a distance of about eight miles. The finish line at that time was about 15 miles ahead. Both ships were running free on the port tack with every yard of canvas that could be spread to the breeze—and the *Messenger* crossed the finish line in Melbourne bay, 98 days from Boston, ahead of the *Thermopylae* by only a few rods.

FROM the time we first got in company with the *Thermopylae* when 15 days out from Boston until the finish of the race—83 consecutive days—every time the watch on deck was relieved the men going below were cautioned by the officers to turn in all standing, which meant to turn in with their clothes on in order to be ready to jump out on deck instantly if called on for assistance in handling the sails.

The same orders applied to the officers in their watch below. The captain never went to bed at night; his sleeping hours were during the daylight part of the day, and he remained on deck all of every night. Some writer once said that the racing captains of the American clipper ships were men with sufficient business ability ashore and the right mixture of caution and recklessness at sea.

Hats off to the American clipper ships of the past and to the officers and crews who sailed them. Their records will ever remain as glorious achievements for the present and future public to take just pride in. Would that the present and future American public might take a similar pride and interest in sending the American flag afloat to all parts of the world in competition with all others.

HERE is something that most people do not like at all, something they regard as necessarily without importance or merit, something not worthy to command their august consideration—simplicity:

To my way of thinking our great country is all right in every way, together with its great outlines of general development socially, economically, politically; however, the one essential thing in which we need a change is in the *spirit* of people, both rich and poor, high and low. When this thought is followed to its logical end it makes no difference what the various differences in men's beliefs are or their stations in life, as long as they meet each other in the spirit of the Golden Rule as stated in the Sermon on the Mount, which its projector called the Supreme Law for mankind. We do not need social or religious reformers or an upsetting of our systems under which we live. If we leave all the present order unchanged but live under it in a different spirit—the Golden Rule spirit—it will change things on earth in a way which nothing else can do. The problem of life, to my way of thinking, is not so much how well we can do our work or how much success we may attain, or gratify our ambitions in all sorts of directions; the real problem to me is the spirit in which we live our lives; the spirit in which we deal with our fellow men; the spirit in which we do our work. If we are able to live ourselves into the spirit of the Golden Rule—*all else will adjust itself accordingly*.—RICHARD FISCHER.

When all the wise men of the world—the learned economists, the skilled statisticians, the canny politicians, the great captains of industry, the "political" reformers—have poured forth upon us all their wisdom, all their ideas for "improving" the world and when all their ideas together have been sifted and proved by the years and generations of actual test, there will not come from them all enough real truth to stand for even a fleeting instant against the one big, simple truth that this comrade has set forth. It is not a new truth—no truth is new. A small minority see it and believe it now. When a majority see and believe it, the world's troubles will begin to lose their awfulness.

At present the vast majority are too "practical" to see it. "O Liberty, how many crimes have been committed in thy name!" I dare say. But how many stupidities are committed under the word "practical"?

The key to a better world, a world free from such stupid atrocities as war, lies inside ourselves. But most of us are so "practical" that, without trying, we decide it can't be used. And that, please note, is about as impractical a piece of reasoning as the human mind can produce. Most of us have learned that the Golden Rule really applied in our individual lives *gets results*. Yet we call it practical wisdom to argue that what gets results for any one, or two, or ten will not get results for all! Or rather, that what any one or two or ten can do, cannot be done by the same people as a whole—if they try. If that is "practical" thinking, no wonder the "practical" minded have got the world into a mess.

A GOOD many others of you have written letters saying much the same:

Don't you think it's time to print something from your readers in defense of your writers? I have for some time noted with impatience the seeming willingness of some readers to accept an enormous mass of facts that represent months of research, and then remonstrate, gently or violently, at some statement that often is, at worst, an expression of opinion.

I AM not, and never have been, a writer of fiction; but for some years I have been on the staff of the largest group of financial newspapers in the United States.

With this in mind, let me say that the "digging" done to get the facts for an historical novel such as Pendexter writes calls for more knowledge, more ability and more perseverance than the financial writer is ever called upon to show.

In my own work our facts come from Government reports, official balance-sheets, etc., and are accepted as exact. But the historical research worker must begin by investigating the facts back of his facts and clearing up a world of contradictions.

The work done, for instance, on such a series as Mr. Harris' "Pirate Tales from the Law" is utterly beyond the conception of 99.9% of our adult male population and quite as utterly beyond the capacity of 99.9999% thereof; that excludes me, I freely admit.

I NOTE with joy that your writers usually win on disputed points, or at least show them to be capable of two interpretations. But to those who insist on publicly pointing out fly-specks on the Washington Monument, please say for me, "Try it yourself and see if you can do as well."

I have never asked for your space before, but I certainly would like to see you publish this or some other defense of your—our—writers, including a plain tabulation of the number of facts stated correctly by each of your writers, compared with the number of errors proved against him.

I believe a single one of your issues often represents an aggregate of six months' work by high-grade men—call it $1,500 to $2,500 worth of labor at a conservative estimate. What do they want for two bits, anyway?— ——— ———.

P. S. I would thank you not to publish either name, initials or place of residence, but to give them freely to any one who may question my good faith.

Yes, I wish it were possible to tabulate all the facts correctly stated in our story by one of our writers. But just try it on some of those that are particularly rich in local color, historical material and so on. At least it's a sure bet that the writers' percentage of correctness is considerably over 99.9. Please remember that before you "bawl out" any of them. But remember, too, that both they and we in the office will thank you for calling attention in a friendly way to any error in our magazine.

THERE isn't any adventure. No thrills. Guess it depends on the make-up of the particular fellow. Have we ever discussed at Camp-Fire the courage, nerve, thrills and so forth of the man who has a goodly imagination and of the man who has little or none?

Thomson Burtis told me once of an aviation training field where the steady stream of accidents and fatalities didn't even dampen the cheerfulness of most of the budding aviators until one day a plane smashed and burned on the field itself, giving all a chance to see with their physical eyes what most of them had not been able to visualize through their imaginations alone. For some time after that there were lots of aviators around there with shattered nerve. Those who stood it best were those with vivid imaginations—those who, until then, had been the ones nearer to shaky nerves.

An old question, but one often forgotten by those who assess men's bravery and coolness.

Westville, New Jersey.

I've nosed long enough around this Camp-Fire without sitting down. Now I'm going to have a seat or I'm going to kick somebody on the shins. If I said all the things I have wanted to say and didn't, you would have to sit up all night to hear it.

RANNY VAN NOSTRAND with his speech about adventure is the man who is responsible for me horning in with this talk. I was born in Ohio some years ago. (I didn't choose the State, but I couldn't have chosen better.) About sixteen years later I started to hunt adventure. I walked through Bad Alley in Cincinnati after dark and alone. Nothing happened, and that was about twenty-four years ago, when a white man was not supposed to be allowed in there. I roamed around South Halstead and South State Sts. in Chicago alone, all hours of the night. Nothing happened.

I was touring over the U. P. some place in the vicinity of Green River, Wyoming. A shack told me to hit the grit one night. It was a long way to the next water-tank and I didn't know whether or not there were any heavy grades near to slow the next train up, so I declined. He shoved a gun in my belly and said "Jump." I didn't think he would shoot, so I said "All right, as soon as we get to the next stop." I didn't have any more thrill than if he had said "Gimme a match" and I had said "I'm all out."

Out on one of the Queen Charlotte Islands, while stripping a vein to see if it showed any signs of copper, a bear walked by about one hundred yards away. I had nothing but a pick, shovel, and 32 automatic. It looked like at last I had a chance to have an adventure. I fired seven shots at the bear to make him mad and started after him with the pick. The darned thing ran away.

I fished for king salmon in a sixteen-foot skiff in Heckate Straights when it was so rough the Alaska Sound steamer couldn't cross. Never a thrill. I sailed a twenty-foot Columbia River boat up Behm Canal in Southeastern Alaska in a sixty-mile wind. Got caught in a cross sea off Yez Bay. Lost my rudder, the boom went in the water as she came about. I let go the sheet and she straightened up. Nothing happened except I lost my hat.

I have tried most things once or more and have decided adventure is what happens to the other fellow.—ED. L. MORGAN.

THE newspaper reproduction this comrade refers to was enclosed in his letter:

Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Allow me to step into the light for a minute. I have been in the shadows at all our Camp-Fires. I have read many articles on how the Indian rope trick was performed, but in my opinion *all* of them don't seem to "get over." I happened to see this reproduction of a photo yesterday in the Altoona *Morning Tribune* and thought it might interest you. It is anything but convincing and in these days of photography what they can do to a negative is a "crime." My opinion of the rope trick is that it never was done, as I have never heard any one in Camp-Fire say they saw it done. It is against all physics and there is no magic.—ROBERT S. ASHLE.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey and Asia Minor
27—29. Balkans. In Three Parts
30. Scandinavia
31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
32. Great Britian
33—35. South America. In Three Parts
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37, 38. Mexico. In Two Parts
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48—53. Western U. S. In Six Parts
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Aviation
Army Matters, United States and Foreign
American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
Standing Information

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Orlando, Fla.

I don't feel very important and there isn't much to tell anyway, so I'd best keep it down to a few words, I guess.

Born a number of years—I'm getting old enough to be ticklish about my age, old-maidlike!—ago back in the Tennessee hills, between the Chuckey and Bays Mountains, on Roaring Fork of Lick Creek, in the humblest of cabins with the inevitable rifle hanging in wooden hooks over the door. No education except in little schoolhouses. Started to writing (?) in my early teens—stories of the Crimean War! No need to say I didn't sell any of those.

Later I wandered around a bit, seeing in turn a good deal of the West, a little of Mexico and something of Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines as a soldier. Came home and lumberjacked and sawmilled for a while, then took up writing again and kept hammering at it at nights, working in the sawmill in the daytime, until I had more or less of success. Have been in Florida for five years. Am an ardent hunter and an absolutely *terrific* fisherman—I think it's a birthmark. And I guess that's all.—HAPSBURG LIEBE.

Ottawa, Canada.

Served in N. W. M. P., 1902. Indian Department, 1904-1915. Since, have been primarily directing my own northwestern Quebec big-game and outing preserves.

Been newspaper correspondent and for nineteen years specialized in special articles on Canada's real Out-O'-Doors for sport and trips for such—big game, fishing, canoe trips, Winter outings, etc. Written annual "Guide on Outdoor Canada." Directed the taking of movies in the North of moose, fishing and outing life. Lectured on the North and its outing and natural resources' possibilities extensively in the U. S.

Am a member of various fish and game associations in U. S. and Canada. Specialized, in brief, on the North of Quebec and Ontario, from LaTuque west into Patricia, and its game, its fishing, canoe trips and outing possibilities and the natural resources of this immense region. Have shot with rifle, still kodak and movie camera, moose, deer, bear and other game and fur-bearers of this North. Have "been there" from one corner to the other, from New Brunswick to B. C. and have as a consequence not superficial knowledge but actual been-there dope and facts.

Now the foregoing isn't written in any egotistic attitude, nor do I want such an impression to be had. I do *know* the North and the guides, the game, the territory from A to Izzard. I've bucked many hundreds of miles of current, poled and towed and sweated and froze, gone hungry and had narrow escapes in the getting of this dope—*Adventure* offers it gratis to readers in my section of "A.A."—S. E. SANGSTER—"CANUCK."

The Marquesas

WHERE nobody wants to make good:

Question:—"I am thinking of going to one of the South Sea Islands, and especially the Marquesas Islands. I would like some general information on the Marquesas and chances of employment and adventure. Do you think there is a good chance for a young man to make good there?

Kindly tell me something of the climate, customs and people. Which is the best place to go? Which is the route to take? What is the attitude of the natives toward foreigners? Would you advise a young man without much capital to go there?"—EDW. C. DANKMYER, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Chas. Brown, Jr.:—Of all the islands in French Oceania the Marquesas are by far the wildest, the loneliest and the least populated. Forty years ago thousands of Marquesans lived happily in their valleys; today but two or three thousand remain, yearning back to the days of their warrior ancestors, to that time before the white man came with his civilization that consisted of a Bible, a bottle of rum, unlimited quantities of opium, venereal disease and the curse of all civilizations—clothes. So that in answering your questions I can tell you only of a place where man does not dream of making good. With his breadfruit and fish and a covering above him, he is contented to let his body breathe the sun-warmth and send his thoughts back to the days before Change came into his valley.

You should have some capital—at least one thousand dollars. For if you decide to remain out there you will soon be looking at land or, to be correct, plantations that have returned to the wild. Marquesan soil is cheap, and what copra—the dried meat of coconuts—is sold to the Tahiti trade brings a good price.

Living will not be expensive. The planter depends on native foods more or less. Still he has two drawbacks with which to contend—the shortage of labor and the Marquesan's unwillingness to work, and insufficient communication with Tahiti, the capital of French Oceania.

Unless a young man goes in for planting and copra-making there is no opportunity whatsoever for him to make good. Throughout all French Oceania the trading-houses work men—French and Tahitians—that have been brought up with the business. Trading is done in two languages, French and Tahitian. The same holds true for all mechanical lines.

On the surface the Marquesan appears to be the jolliest of all South Sea islanders. But within his dark heart and savage mind lurks a hatred for the white man. For did not this savage's ancestors die of white man's civilization? And is he not gradually dying of the same thing? Still one can get on with him and pass happy days on end.

In the way of sports and adventure you will find some fine hunting and some particularly hazardous canoeing and boating. All of the valleys are overrun with wild pigs, goats, cattle and chickens. Too, wild dogs. And there are Marquesan valleys for exploring. In short, sport and adventure are not passing away with the native.

Almost on the equator, French Oceania has just two seasons—Spring and Summer. Rain holds from November to March. The temperature varies between 70 and 86 degrees, with considerable humidity.

If you are still of a mind to become a South Sea islander, write to Hind, Rolph & Co., General Agents for the Union Steamship Company, 230 California St., San Francisco, Calif., for passenger rates and sailings to Tahiti, Society Islands. The usual voyage consumes all of twelve days.

At Papeete, Tahiti, you can buy passage on any of the trading-schooners running between there and Marquesas. You should go to the isle of Hivaoa, the Marquesan capital.

Read the following books and articles:

"In the South Seas," Robert Louis Stevenson.

"White Shadows in the South Seas," Frederick O'Brien.

"A Vanishing Race," John W. Church, *National Geographic Magazine*, September, 1919. A faithful and carefully written account of contemporary Marquesan life.

"The Dream Ship," Ralph Stock, *National Geographic Magazine*, January, 1921. Voyaging in a lifeboat to the Marquesas.

Should you go I wish you the best o' luck.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

The Way to "Fisherman's Heaven"

ROVALIA—cavelle—and tarpon that rise to plugs:

Question:—"I have just been in the Ten Thousand Island country of Florida with Gene Hamilton. He told me of your very successful fishing, especially in Cabbage Bay, and I told him I would try to get him some lines or plugs such as you used and send them to him. I would very much appreciate it if you would care to tell me what you found best in the way of plugs there. Did you have any luck in getting the small tarpon to strike?"—J. HOPKINS SMITH, Jr., Aiken, S. C.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—Your letter certainly revives pleasant memories of Florida's Ten Thousand Islands, the best fishing I have ever found, and Gene Hamilton. I wrote the trip up for *Field & Stream*, and it was published some two months ago, with photographs.

Hamilton is a unique figure, isn't he? I presume he is one of the precious few that could find that hidden fish Heaven, Cabbage Bay. And fish Heaven is a good name for it. I got a strike there at nearly every cast, and the fish tore my tackle up scandalously. I never saw anything like it. Rovalia (or snook) as long as an oar, cavelle (jack) that looked like a big slab of solid gold, and tarpon, (yes, tarpon)—*and on plugs!*

But to answer your questions. The plug that they took best down there was a floating Bassoreno, made by the South Bend people. The color they seemed to be craziest about was a white plug with red and green spots on it, though they simply ate up everything I took with me in the shape of plugs. I was unfortunate in having only light lines—comparatively, 24-lb. test. It was only when I put on a 100-ft. length of sea-line of 42-lb. test (linen) that I could hold them at all. Linen casts badly unless it is braided instead of twisted, but it has silk beat all hollow for lasting in salt water.

If I go down there again—and I expect to go; I expect to write Hamilton at Chokoloskee and have him meet me in his launch at either Fort Myers or Marco—I am going to take a light sea outfit, rod, reel and 36-lb test linen line, with about 50 of the bigger size Bassoreno plugs. The hooks on the smaller Bassorenos won't stand the pressure; those fish down there snap them off readily. I hooked lots of tarpon, caught a few, but lost the bigger ones because I couldn't handle them on so short a line and such little hooks.

One important thing with the Bassoreno is to jerk it on the surface, so that it makes a noise, instead of reeling it straight in. Man, how those fish do lambaste it! And I'm here to say that a cavelle fights as hard, though he rarely breaks water, as any other fish in the world of his weight. I had one on down there that was about 34 inches long and about 20 inches wide that gave me the fight of my life; he stripped the gears in my reel, and I had to pull him in (a dirty shame!) by hand—and he cut my fingers half off with the line.

I've got to stop writing about this fish Heaven, or else they'll be carting me off to a sanatorium somewhere.

P. S.—Another good bait for these fish is Heddon's Zaragosa, preferably in the lighter colors.

Coconut-Culture in Mexico

TAKE a peep over my shoulder at the dictionary:

Spadix.—A spike or head of flowers with a fleshy axis, usually enclosed within a peculiarly enveloping leaf called a spathe.

And now, with a spadix in one hand and a spathe in the other, let's go!

Question:—"I hope to obtain a little information as to the raising of coconuts in Mexico. I and several friends are interested in a tract of land south of Acapulco, in the State of Guerrero, and we have been informed that this land is good for the planting of coconuts.

Any information you can give me will be more than appreciated. I enclose an International Reply Coupon for reply. If this letter is published please do not print my name." — ——— ———, Baltimore, Md.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—If the land you mention in your letter is located on the long narrow coastal plain south of Acapulco called the Papagallo it is ideal for coconuts; but as you may know, coconuts are always best in sight of salt water, and it is by means of the sea that they are spread.

First of all the coconut palm grows best in salt marshes along the seacoast, or partly in salt water. It thrives best in low, sandy soils, within the influence of the sea-breeze, and rarely attains the same perfection when grown inland; nor does it produce so early or so heavily inland as along the seaboard.

A well-watered tree in good sandy loam begins to yield at 5 years of age, and in poor soil when it is 8 to 10 years old. Trees growing in mangrove soils, on the sides of creeks, and more or less saturated with salt, have saline sap, and their nuts have brackish milk. Such trees do not suffer from the attack of the rhinoceros beetle, which at times causes great damage in plantations located at any considerable distance from the coast; and they bear much sooner and more than the latter. Stony ground or that overlying a rocky foundation is not at all suitable for coconut cultivation and should not be selected for that purpose.

The best soils for coconuts are: Those mixed with sand, either dark loam or river wash; sandy soil mixed with clay, ferruginous earth, or black mold; light clayey soil where there exists an understratum of sand; a mixture of sand and clay that does not pack, even though it be mixed with gravel and pebbles; the seashore, banks of backwaters of tidal rivers, alluvium of rivers and backwaters at an elevation of not more than 4 feet above high water, marshy lands in brackish waters, but not where salt is formed in crystals by evaporation; all level stretches of sandy soil exposed to the sea breeze where the land is naturally rich, such as low valleys near the sea.

The prime requisite is a thoroughly permeable soil, from which the palm can obtain a copious supply of water; and it is doubtless due to this reason that the rich, permeable, well-drained alluvial soils mixed with decomposing marine algæ are held to be the best for coconut culture.

It flourishes beautifully on the low Pacific atolls at an elevation of 6 to 12 feet above water-level, where the soil is formed by débris of coral mixture and the remains of sea creatures. The palm thrives in sunshine and plenty of water, and for this reason does best on cleared land where its leaves do not come in contact with other vegetation.

A well-distributed rainfall of 60 to 100 inches per year is required, although it will thrive on deep soil with an annual rainfall of 50 inches where the roots can easily spread out in search of water. Too much rainfall for the coconut seems impossible; the best nuts that come to the New York market are from the San Blas coast near Panama, where the annual rainfall is about 225 inches. The land must be well drained, however, or it will sour.

The first steps necessary in the starting of a coconut plantation, after suitable land has been selected, is the selection of proper seed nuts from which the young palms are to be grown. Those from middle-aged producing palms are the best. Small, shriveled nuts or those from very old trees are likely to produce slow-growing palms that would not come into bearing until the eighth year or later and should be rejected.

The nuts should be thoroughly ripened and have fallen from the trees, instead of being knocked down.

The usual practise in the Americas is to place the nuts in seed beds near the ocean, packed one against the other and filled in between with soil to about half the depth of the husk. Nuts that do not sprout within five months from the time of planting should be rejected, as if they do live the palms will probably lag through life. The nuts are placed slightly on the side in the seed beds.

Clearing and transplanting take place after the young palms attain a six months' growth, although some planters prefer to transplant them from the first seed bed to a second, setting them out in the second at a distance of 2 feet apart and leaving them in the second bed from 12 to 18 months longer.

Whichever method is pursued, the palms are ultimately set out at a distance of from 18 to 30 feet apart, according to the nature of the soil and the country. If they are to be exposed to heavy winds they must be lined out so as to present all possible resistance in the direction from which the heavy winds blow, and this has much to do with the manner of planting.

At 20 feet apart triagonally 125 trees may be planted to the acre; at 25 feet apart triagonally, 82 to the acre may be planted.

The land is usually cleared during the dry season, the nuts being transplanted at the beginning of the wet season. This method assures favorable conditions under which the young palms begin their growth.

The length of time that elapses thereafter until the palms come into bearing depends principally on two things: First, the attention given the palms; and second, the soil. If underbrush is allowed to grow in around the young trees and overtop them, even in the most fertile soil the trees are likely not to come into bearing until the seventh or eighth year. If the ground around the young trees for a distance of 6 to 8 feet is kept cleared and the soil is at all suitable for coconut cultivation a few nuts may be expected between the fifth and sixth years.

Thereafter the production per palm will increase until the tenth to twelfth year to from 50 to 250 nuts per tree per year. One hundred to 150 nuts a year is considered a good yield.

All diseased, dead or fallen leaves should be collected and burned regularly, as the larvæ of insects injurious to the trees find food in the decaying leaves. Dead or dying trees that can not be saved should be cut down and burned immediately. In Ceylon and India fertilizing is carried on, common manure being used. The refuse of the nuts after expressing the oil is an excellent fertilizer, and is used to some extent.

The Central American native also has a custom which is carried out on small plantations. When the palm throws out its first spadix of flowers a dried corn-husk filled with coarse salt is placed upright between the inner side of the spathe and the trunk of the tree. During heavy rains the salt is washed down into the crown of the tree. This is found to be an excellent preventive to the bacterial bud rot which has caused so much damage in the West Indian plantations.

The best productive years of the coconut are from the fifth year to the fortieth although it will live and produce up to 70 and even 100 years.

The principal products of the coconut palm are raw nuts, from which the dessicated meat is made; copra, or the dried kernel, from which oil is expressed; poonac, or the residue left after the oil is pressed from the copra; and coir, or the fiber of the woody husk. The uses of these products, as well as of the entire palm, are almost innumerable. It is said that a vessel may be built and laden entirely from the coconut palm.

From the sap a liquid is obtained called toddy. This is allowed to ferment, and the strong liquid obtained is called arrack.

This is about all the information I can give you about coconut culture, but it gives you the principal data.

Canoeing the Peribonca River

HEAVY going:

Question:—"I am planning a canoe trip this Summer and have in mind starting from Roberval, Lake St. John, and going up the Peribonca River to Lake Tschotagama, returning by way of the Brulé River and the Petite Peribonca.

As the authority on that district for the *Adventure* magazine would you be kind enough to answer some questions for me?

Can you give me the name of an agent at Roberval who will outfit a party for such a trip, engaging guides, canoes, tents, etc.? Or can you give me the name of some good man in that district to whom I could write now to make arrangements?

Is it practical to reach Lake Manouan by the Peribonca River, and how much of a trip is it beyond Lake Tschotagama?

Is it practical to portage from the Brulé River into the Petite Peribonca in September? Would it make a better trip of it by going in by way of the Petite Peribonca?

There would be two men in the party and two canoes and two or four guides. Would be able to be away two to three weeks. Would we expect to get any duck-shooting on the lakes besides fishing, say Sept. 1st to 15th?

Could we get licenses at Quebec or Roberval? Thank you for this information as I want to make my plans definite and engage some gear for a certain date.

Enclosed is a three-cent stamped envelop. If you refer this to 'Ask Adventure' please use only my initials."—R. W. P., Wilmington, Del.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Inasmuch as much of the territory above Lake St. John is burned over, I frankly do not "see" it at all for a trip such as you outline.

Why not, for instance, take the Drowning River trip west of Cochrane in northern Ontario? The finest big square-tail trout fishing (fly) I have yet seen. This also is excellent moose country with the big game season on moose opening September 15th.

Then there is our Messagami Preserve, a virgin territory with splendid duck and grouse shooting from late August, with moose from September 10th and deer from September 1st.

The only people I know of to outfit you for the Lake St. John-Peribonca trip would be Hudson's Bay Co., Pointe Bloué, Lake St. John.

P. S.—I am of the opinion you can not make the route you outline save under heavy going.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Bibliography of West Africa

MARY KINGSLEY—dead at 38:

Question:—"Can you furnish me with a list of eight or ten books on the countries of Africa covered by your department? Would like to have books on the habits, life and description of the natives, the plant and animal life. Wish to avoid if possible books dwelling on social functions, politics, commercial data, and books written in the ordinary travel style.

Wish them for my own library. Can secure books issued by English publishers if you care to recommend them.

If you can furnish me with a list of books as outlined above, it will certainly be appreciated.—" R. C. WRIGHT, New Orleans, La.

Answer, by Mr. Simpson:—On books covering West Africa, according to your preference for those having most to do with the customs of the country and with plant and animal life, I have no hesitation in recommedning the following titles which, though some of them would indicate just what you do not want, are nevertheless the best of their kind in any department.

"Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa," by Heinrich Barth. (This work, a classic in its field, was originally published in 1857 or thereabout. It is now out of print, but can be picked up in second-hand shops if you want it badly enough. It may be had in a four-volume or two-volume edition. It is an American as well as an English publication.)

"Travels in West Africa," by Mary H. Kingsley; "West African Studies," by Mary H. Kingsley. (Both out of print, but well worth getting hold of. In West Africa's history few figures stand out more prominently than that of Mary Kingsley.)

"The Lower Niger and Its Tribes," by Arthur Glyn Leonard, (MacMillan & Co., New York, 1906); In the Shadow of the Bush," by P. Amaury Talbot (Doran, New York, 1912); "The Tailed Head-Hunters of Nigeria," by A. J. N. Tremearne (Seeley, Service & Co., Ltd., London, 1912); "Liberia, by Sir Harry Johnson (London, 1906); "A Transformed Colony," by T. J. Aldridge (London, 1910); "Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria," by E. Dayrell (An out-of-print London publication, date unknown); "The Land of Fetish (London, 1883) and "The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the West Coast of Africa (London, 1887) both by Col. A. B. Ellis; "Hausaland," by C. H. Robinson (London, 1896).

I think you will find in these, most of what you are looking for; that is, if you can find them at all!

I'm wishing you luck.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Jobs on New Mexico's Ranches

THE romance of the open range is becoming the workaday routine of the pasture lot:

Question:—"Is there any chance to get work on a cattle ranch down in New Mexico? Where do I go, how do I get it?

Please don't put my name in magazine."—A. G., New York.

Answer, by Mr. Robinson:—The day of the open cattle range is about past. Most of the big cattle companies have gone out of business. A cattle ranch of today offers about the same chance that one would have in getting a job on any Eastern farm, though of course in the handling of the cattle there is still some range work.

For two years New Mexico has suffered drought conditions, and last Spring and Summer from one-half to three-fourths of the cattle were shipped out to where there was feed to be had. If one really wanted a job along that line he would have to be here to get it, and if he had had no previous experience as a cowboy or in the handling of cattle he would not have much show. The cow pony has given place to the flivver, and the open range to the pasture lot with a few head of cattle.

While the above is not absolutely true, it is in the main. The U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry has twenty applicants for jobs of this kind to one man they can place. This was told me by the local bureau head within the past half-hour.

If you want to get out of the city you would do much better to get a job as a farmhand in the East or the Middle West.

However, a good man, not afraid of work, who will come to New Mexico needn't go without a job of some kind, and if really in earnest can usually land the kind of a job he wants in time.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

A Sou'-Spainer's Cruise

ALSO some reminiscences of sailing-ship days:

Question:—"I intend to make a cruise through the South Sea Islands some time and would like to know just what sort of a craft would be best suited for a trip such as that. I had thought of an auxiliary schooner yacht about 75 feet over all.

What books on navigation would you recommend for a beginner? I would like to navigate the craft myself if possible. Where could I purchase a good sailing-chart of these waters, and what would I require in the way of a navigating-outfit?

I've had a little sea-faring experience; about three years in steam and sail, mostly sail—the *Chiltonford* of Glasgow, four-mast barque; the *Eudora* of Liverpool, four-mast barque; the *Battle Abbey* of Newcastle, three-mast barque.

I do enjoy reading your sea tales; they are always so good and realistic. I like nothing better than a good sea story. Please don't publish my name."—C. W. M., Oloa, Hawaii.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Glad to hook fins with an old Sou'-Spainer. I knew both *Chiltonford* and *Eudora*. *Chiltonford* was a much bigger ship than *Eudora*, and if I remember rightly Corsar of Glasgow ran her. Atkinson was captain of her when I knew the ship.

Eudora was one of Shute's ships, Liverpool; and her skipper was Captain George, I think. The *Battle Abbey* was an old-timer. Built same year as I was born—1874. I know her only by reputation; though as late as 1910 she still flew the old Red Duster.

With regard to your cruise: If I knew what style you expect to cruise in I could advise you better. Are you going to have a paid crew? How many? All amateurs? How many? Going it alone? For four men you will find something in the auxiliary schooner or ketch type, about sixty feet over all (short ends) as big as you want. If you have six men, go to the seventy-five-foot class. For less than four men you ought to find something in the stout forties or not more than fifty. I have a fifty-foot schooner which I handle alone; but she has room for and is perfect with four.

If you know nothing at all of navigation, an old Bowditch is really all you want. You will absolutely need to master the various methods of dead reckoning; meridian altitude for latitude; the sun-chronometer method for longitude, and amplitudes. I assume you already know that the compass doesn't point north.

You can get all the charts you need from the Hawaiian News Company, Honolulu. For outfit, you need compass, dividers, parallel rulers, log, chronometer, charts, Nautical Almanac, barometer and sextant.

I wish you luck and fair winds.

The French River Fishing-Ground

BASS—pickerel—maskinonge:

Question:—"A friend of mine and myself, with our wives, are contemplating a two or three weeks' fishing-trip on the French River this Summer.

We have selected this locality for the reason that I have always heard of it as being the finest bass-fishing grounds in Canada. I would appreciate it very much if you could advise me whether this is the case, and also let me know the best season to make such a trip, and where to write to arrange for guides and boats, etc.? Can you also inform me as to whether there are hotels in this locality at which we can stay, or will it be necessary to camp up?"—SELDEN E. MAY, Rochester, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—You are right; the French River with its hundreds of rapids and the two lakes, Nipissing at its head and Georgian Bay at its mouth, is an ideal water for small-mouthed black bass. In fact, in all of Canada I know of no better fishing-ground. And not only for bass, either. Personally I have caught at its mouth, in the bay, some of the finest pickerel and maskinonge I ever landed. You can make no mistake in choosing this water.

As for the best time to make this trip: Opinions differ among fishermen. Black bass bite all Summer—from the time the season opens till the ice forms. But in my own experience, covering some thirty years, I have found the late Fall the best. And for several reasons, First, the bass are biting best, owing in my opinion to the fact that the approaching Winter in these waters means the depths for them and very little food, and they hunt long and continuously for food to put on fat for the Winter season. Next, the water is cold, which means more life for the fish, more pep, and he puts up a better scrap. Next, the fly and mosquito season is over, more comfort for the fisherman, and the cold frosty mornings add zest to the "getting up."

And bait, if you use natural bait, is easier to choose. Grasshoppers—great big fellows at this season of the year—are cold and easily caught in the early mornings and are one of the best of baits; and the Summer's frogs, spawned late, are just the right size; and these two baits can not be beaten for bass. And the bass are up in the shallows hunting food. If you use artificial baits, the best are some of the plugs. The bass-oreno and the rush-tango are two of the best. But for an all-round bait it is hard to beat the little silver minnow—any old time.

There is a sportsmen's camp on Dry Pine Bay, about two miles from French River Station; cabin and tent accommodation with motor-boat transfer; camping-parties are also outfitted here. Mr. A. L. Dubois, proprietor; address, Bigwood P. O., Ontario. Also another hotel at Pickerel Landing—the Wanikewin; proprietor, Mr. Martin H. Fenton; address, Wanikewin P. O., Pickerel River, C. P. R. R., Ont. Mail in and out daily from both places.

Write either of these two places for reservations well in advance. All arrangements for guides, boats, etc., can be made in advance. Take your tackle with you; everything else obtainable on the spot.

And I wish you all the luck in the world.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

IT HAS been some time since any songs of a humorous nature have appeared in the department, though this omission has not been the result of any fixed policy on the part of the editor. All songs of whatever nature that for any considerable period have been passed on by word of mouth, especially if they have never been printed or are inaccessible in print, are welcome.

But the editor must depend largely upon you readers to discover such songs and to send them in. If, therefore, you want songs of a certain type, send more of that type to the department. Although lack of space may prevent many from being printed, the preference indicated by your contributions will, in general, determine which shall be selected.

THE following songs are chosen more or less at random from my note-books. They are alike only in that they are all amusing. In all other respects they belong to very different groups.

The first, "Dese Bones Gwine Rise Ag'in," sounds like a minstrel version of what was originally a much more sober and impressive negro song. A copy of the earlier song was printed in W. F. Allen's "Slave Songs of the United States." The refrain and chorus should be sung with each verse.

Dese Bones Gwine Rise Ag'in

(*Text obtained from Miss Nellie and Mr. Ham Pope Galt as sung traditionally in the Galt Family.*)

Lord he thought he'd make a man;
Dese bones gwine rise ag'in!
Made him out o' dirt an' a little bit o' sand.
Dese bones gwine rise ag'in!
I kno-ow,
Deed I do know, honey,
I kno-ow
Dese bones gwine rise ag'in!

Thought he'd make a woman too;
Didn't know 'xactly what to do.

Took a rib from Adam's side;
Made Miss Eve for to be his bride.

Put 'em in a garden rich an' fair;
Tol' 'em to eat what dey found dere.

To one tall tree dey mus' not go;
Dere mus' de fruit forever grow.

Ol' Miss Eve come a-walkin' roun';
Spied dat tree all loaded down.

Sarpent he came roun' de trunk;
At Miss Eve his eye he wunk.

Firs' she took a little pull;
Den she filled her apron full.

Adam he come prowlin' roun';
Spied dem peelin's on de groun'.

Den he took a little slice;
Smack his lips an' said 'twas nice.

Lord He spoke with a mighty voice;
Shook de heavens to de joists.

"Adam! Adam! Where art thou?"
"Yes, Mas'r Lord, Ise a-comin' now."

"You e't my apples, I believe?"
"Not me, Lord, but I 'spec' 'twas Eve."

"Out of my garden you mus' git;
Dese bones gwine rise ag'in!
For you an' me has got to quit."
Dese bones gwine rise ag'in!
I kno-ow,
'Deed I do know, honey,
I kno-ow
Dese bones gwine rise ag'in!

THE second, "Rosalie," is obviously of white origin, and seems to be a burlesque on the sentimental song of the Stephen Foster type. It was sung to me with great humor by Mr. Renfrow of Kingsburg, Calif., who told me that he had often heard it sung in all seriousness.

Rosalie

'Way down in old Kentucky not many years ago
Where I used to hunt the 'possum and the coon,
Where the darkies used to gather round to have a little fun
When the fiddle and the banjo were in tune

Hang up the fiddle and the banjo on the wall
Lay 'way the bones and tambourine!
Then death's taken Rosalie, the only girl I loved
From the little old log cabin by the stream.

The swamp fever settled on her dark-brown cheek
While death was a-knocking at the door.
How my poor heart suffered in its soul-bursting grief
When I heard that Rosie was no more!

Hang up the fiddle and the banjo on the wall
Lay 'way the bones and tambourine!
Then death's taken Rosalie, the only girl I loved
From the little old log cabin by the stream.

The night-hawk waileth and the wildcat screams
While the copperhead is hissing in the shade.
They shall not come hither to disturb her dreams,
For I'm watching by the stream where she is laid.

Hang up the fiddle and the banjo on the wall
Lay 'way the bones and tambourine!
Then death's taken Rosalie, the only girl I loved
From the little old log cabin by the stream.

CONCERNING the third song I have no information. It was given to me some seven years ago by Mr. J. W. Lowes, then a student at Harvard. It has no title, and seems to be fragmentary.

A great big bull he chased me round de field—
I been dere dis good while!
I got behind a stump, my body for to shield—
I been dere dis good while!
Oh, my
Ain't I gwine to die?
Oh, my!
I been dere dis good while!

Ole Mister Bull, you think you're mighty smart!
I been dere dis good while!
You can't ketch me 'cayse I got de start!
I been dere dis good while!
Oh, my!
Ain't I gwine to die?
Oh, my!
I been dere dis good while!

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions about them direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif. Do NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MAY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

GOING HOME! ***John Webb***
What draws a man from the tropics?

THE GRUDGE HOUND ***S. Omar Barker***
A dog that didn't know he was beaten.

RIFLE RULE A Five-Part Story Part IV ***Hugh Pendexter***
The Indians corner their victims.

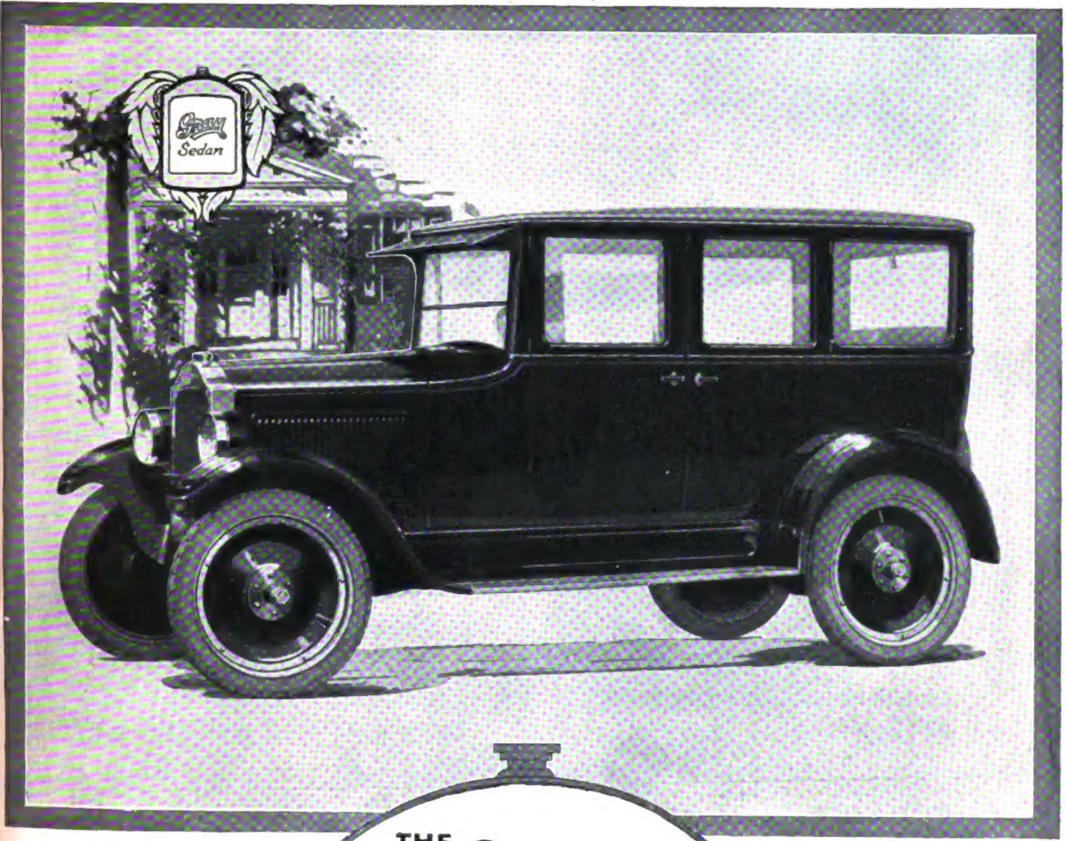
THE MAN WHO WAS DEAD ***Conroy Kroder***
He went to the South Seas.

IN THE DEPTHS ***Dale Collins***
Rival divers.

THEY CALL HIM AKWINIMI ***Alanson Skinner***
How the young Menomini brave earned his title in battle against the Sauk warriors.

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Arthur D. Howden Smith, Leonard H. Nason, Gordon Young, J. D. Newsom, Barry Scobee, T. S. Stribling, H. C. Bailey, Georges Surdez and Frederick Moore; and short stories by William Byron Mowery, Bill Adams, George E. Holt, John Scarry, F. St. Mars, Herman Petersen, Captain Dingle, Frank Robertson, Thomas Topham and Wolcott LeCléar Beard and others—stories of vikings in Constantinople, doughboys on the Western Front, gold-seekers in Borneo, gunmen in New York, asphalt-diggers in Trinindad, prospectors in Australia, sheep-herders in Montana, bandits on the Border, aviators in the War, French troopers in Africa, high-graders in Alaska, fortune-hunters in the South Seas, guerrilla fighters in Mexico, knights-at-arms in medieval France, deck-hands on the Western Ocean, desert riders in Morocco, fur-trappers in Labrador, adventurers the world around.



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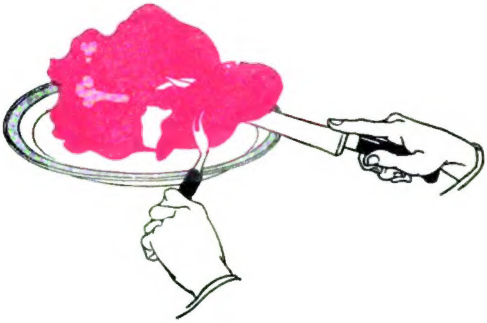

What sort of figure do you cut when you carve?

WHEN a crisp brown turkey or leg of lamb is placed in front of you and you sharpen the edge of your carving-knife—do you know the exact spot at which you should start to cut? Do you know where to insert the fork before you carve? Charles Faissole, maître d'hôtel of the Ambassador Hotel, New York, tells you how to carve poultry, roasts, fish, steak, legs and even roast pig in The New Butterick Cook Book.

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